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ABSTRACT

This guide provides essays and learning activities relating to gender issues and economic development in Asian nations. This collection of essays provides broad coverage of Asia from Iran to Malaysia to Korea, while maintaining a focus on South Asia for contrast. They represent a variety of Asian cultural and religious groups while focusing on the religion of Islam for contrast and depth. The essays emphasize that the diversity of experiences and circumstances of Asian women are as significant as those they hold in common. There are eight essays with accompanying learning activities for each essay. Essays include: (1) "Women and Gender in Contemporary China" (Carolyn L. Carter); (2) "Women and Development on Cheju Island, South Korea" (Siyoung Park); (3) "Development and Factory Women: Negative Perceptions from a Malaysian Source Area" (Amriah Buang); (4) "Gender and Spatial Mobility in Iran" (Mohammad Hemmasi); (5) "Gender Relations in Rural Bangladesh: Aspects of Differential Norms about Fertility, Morality, and Health Practices" (K. Maudood Elahi); (6) "Women's Roles in Rural Sri Lanka" (Anoja Wickramasinghe); (7) "Invisible Agricultural Labor in India" (Parvati Raghuram); and (8) "An Equitable Future?: A Brief Look at Women's Activities in Asia" (Kiran Banga Chhoker, Chiang Lan-hung, Carolyn V. Prorok). A 32-item annotated bibliography concludes the volume. (EH)

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A PATHWAYS IN GEOGRAPHY
Resource Publication

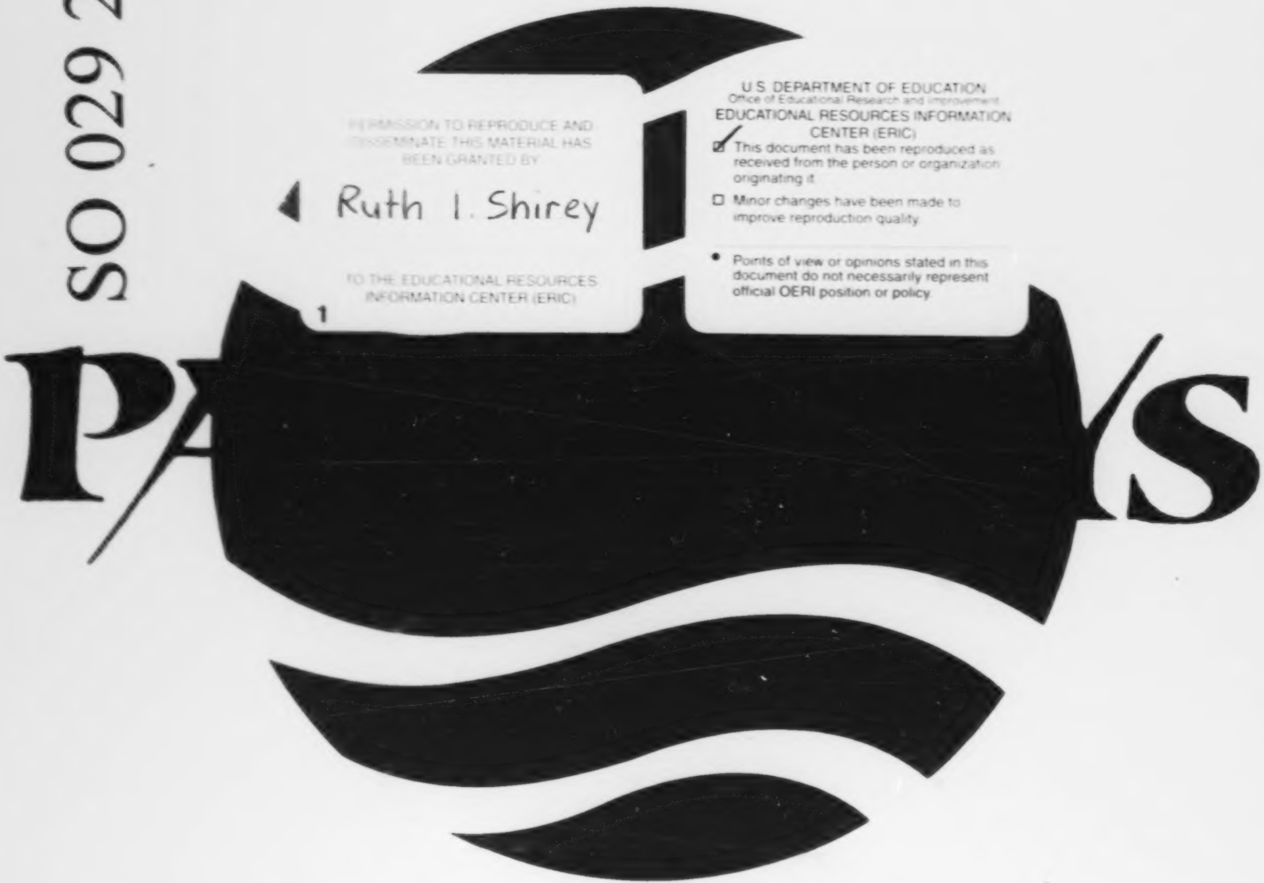
National Council for
Geographic Education

Asian Women and Their Work:

A Geography of Gender and Development

Carolyn V. Prorok and
Kiran Banga Chhokar,
Editors

SO 029 247



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Asian Women and Their Work:

A Geography of Gender and Development

Carolyn V. Prorok and
Kiran Banga Chhokar,
Editors

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Asian Women and Their Work: A Geography of Gender and Development

Carolyn V. Prorok and Kiran Banga Chhokar, Editors

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Contents

Introduction i
Carolyn V. Prorok and Kiran Banga Chhokar

Chapters

1. **Essay:** Women and Gender in Contemporary China 1
Carolyn L. Cartier
Learning Activity: Holding up More Than Half the Sky: A Woman's Place in China 8
Carolyn V. Prorok
Guided Imagery: Lalu's Story 13

2. **Essay:** Women and Development on Cheju Island, South Korea 15
Siyoung Park
Learning Activity: Losing Ground: Women's Changing Economic Role on Cheju Island 22
Siyoung Park

3. **Essay:** Development and Factory Women: Negative Perceptions from a Malaysian Source Area 27
Amriah Buang
Learning Activity: Balancing between Two Worlds: Stereotyping Factory Women in Malaysia 36
Carolyn V. Prorok
Selena's Story 40

4. **Essay:** Gender and Spatial Mobility in Iran 41
Mohammad Hemmasi
Learning Activity: Following in My Family's Footsteps: Explaining Migration in Iran 55
Beth Mitchneck

5. **Essay:** Gender Relations in Rural Bangladesh: Aspects of Differential Norms about Fertility, Morality, and Health Practices 69
K. Maudood Elahi
Learning Activity: Living Without: Women's Access to Health and Educational Resources in Bangladesh 78
F. Munira Ismail

6. **Essay:** Women's Roles in Rural Sri Lanka 89
Anoja Wickramasinghe
Learning Activity: Is It My Job or Yours? 101
Martha Sharma

7. **Essay:** Invisible Agricultural Labor in India 109
Parvati Raghuram
Learning Activity: Difficult Choices: Navigating the Intersections of Modern Development and Environmental Degradation in India 115
Kiran B. Chhokar
Musings of a Fragmented Family 122
Kiran B. Chhokar

Summary Essay: An Equitable Future?: A Brief Look at Women's Activities in Asia 125
Kiran Banga Chhoker, Chiang Lan-hung, and Carolyn V. Prorok

Media Resources 129

List of Illustrations

Tables

2.1 Population Growth of Cheju Do 16
2.2 Women Divers by Age 17
2.3 Fishery Workers and Divers in Cheju 18
2.4 Cheju Fishery Products 19
2.5 Tangerine Production 19

3.1 Perception of Personal Changes That Occurred When Women Became Factory Employees 29
3.2 Occupations Considered Suitable for Women 30
3.3 Perception of Suitability of Alternative Occupations 30
3.4 Perception of Whether Malay Muslim Girls Should Be Encouraged to Work in Factories 31
3.5 Perception of Whether Respondents' Female Family Members Should Be Encouraged to Work in Factories 31

4.1 Education by Sex and Residence, Iran, 1956-1986 44
4.2 Labor Force and Labor Force Participation and Rural-Urban Residence-Iran, 1956-1986 45
4.3 Nuptiality Measures in Iran, 1976-1986 45
4.4 In-migrants of All Ages by Sex and Residence, Iran 1956-1986 46
4.5 Sex ratio and Interprovincial Women Migration Indexes, Iran, 1976-1986 47

5.1 Measures of Fertility and Mortality in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 70
5.2 Five Major Reported Causes of Death in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 70
5.3 Health Facilities Available in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 71
5.4 Disease Pattern by Duration of Illnesses of Affected Persons in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 72
5.5 Adoption of Treatment of Sick Persons in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 72
5.6 Reaction to Increasing the Age of Marriage of Girls by 3 Years in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 73
5.7 Reasons for Favoring an Increase in Age of Marriage for Girls, Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 73
5.8 Reasons for Not Favoring an Increase in Age of Marriage for Girls, Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 74

6.1 Division of Female and Male Labor in Agriculture and Fishing Activities 90
6.2 Division of Labor in Paddy Cultivation 91
6.3 Sexual Divisions of Labor in Agricultural Activities 93
6.4 Time Spent on Agricultural and Domestic Activities by Men and Women 96
6.5 Gender Differences in Participation in Household Activities 97

Figures*

1.1 China and Its Neighbors 4
1.2 Outline Map of China 9

2.1 Map of South Korea 15
2.2 Outline Map of South Korea 23

3.1 Map of Malaysia 28
3.2 Study Area in Permatang Pauh 29
3.3 Outline Map of Malaysia 37

4.1 Iran and Its Provinces 42
4.2 Iran, Physical Features 43
4.3 Number of In-migrants by Age and Sex During 1976-1986 48
4.4 Dominant Migration Streams Including at Least 1000 Net-Migrants and Efficiency Ratio over 50% 49
4.5 Outline Map of Iran 56
4.6 Outline Map of Physical Features of Iran 57

5.1 Map of Bangladesh 70
5.2 Bangladesh with Selected Place Names 79
5.3 Outline Map of Bangladesh 80

6.1 Map of Sri Lanka 90
6.2 The Major Ecological Zones of Sri Lanka and the Study Area 90
6.3 The Labour Force Participation of Males and Females, 1963 and 1981 91
6.4 Distribution of Male and Female Labour in the Agricultural and Fishing Sector, 1981 92
6.5 Peak and Slack Season Labour Requirements and Participation, Sri Lanka 94
6.6 Gender Disparity in the Seasonal and Annual Time-Use Pattern 95

7.1 Map of India 110
7.2 Gender Differences in Household Agricultural Labor 111
7.3 Average Annual Labor Units by Month by Gender of Household Members 112
7.4 Proportion of Total Agricultural Labor Done by Men and Women—Peak Period 112
7.5 Proportion of Total Agricultural Labor Done by Men and Women—Slack Period 113
7.6 Outline Map of India 118

* Place Name Maps, Provincial Maps and Outline Maps were produced by David K. Patton for this volume.

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Introduction

Carolyn V. Prorok and Kiran Banga Chhokar

Studies in social geography have shown us that gender plays a significant role in: 1) producing the character of particular places, 2) access to and specialized uses of the natural environment, 3) migration experiences, and 4) producing working conditions and economic development from the local to the global in scale (Bell and Valentine 1995; Rose 1995; McDowell 1993; Brydon and Chant 1989; Monk and Hanson 1982). Gender refers to the ways in which a group of people socialize infants into their society based upon their perceptions of the infant's sexual identity (e.g.; upon seeing a new infant with female sex organs the family and community will immediately treat the infant as female and socialize her into the expected behaviors and roles for women). It is this *gendered identity*, and the perceptions and expectations of the people in one's society relative to gender, that can have a profound impact on the way we use our environments (both natural and social), the kinds of work we do, migration patterns and much, much more. In this volume, we will illustrate the intersection of geography and gender by focusing on women's experiences of agricultural and global development in Asia.

Women's Contributions to Productive Work

When Ester Boserup wrote her now classic book, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, in 1970, most people in the world viewed women primarily as homemakers and men as providers for the family and as the primary participants in economic activities. Boserup (1970) highlighted women's contribution to productive work. Professionals and lay people alike had also assumed that economic development benefited both men and women equally. Moreover, women's economic roles in both traditional and modern contexts had yet to be analyzed from women's points of view. Western medical doctors have only recently recognized what social scientists began investigating more than 20 years ago; that women's experiences and circumstances are different than men's, and research on men's conditions does not necessarily tell us what we need to know about women.

Boserup's (1970) pioneering study pointed to the possible misallocation of funds and other resources for development owing to the failure to recognize women's contribution in the economy. Her study spurred economists and governments into action. The United Nations declared 1975-1985 as the Decade for Women. The assumption had been that the expansion of development efforts would automatically lead to an improvement in women's economic status (Shiva 1988, 1989). However small in the total picture, some projects targeted women and the economic issues they faced. Apart from the inadequacies of those projects, global economic forces cut social expenditures and the development projects that they supported. At the end of the decade, much of the research concluded that "with a few exceptions, women's access to economic resources, income and employment has worsened, and their burden of work has increased" (Dawn 1985: 21). In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing took stock of the last decade. The news is still grim. Despite government planning, special funding by development agencies and the success of women's grassroots organizations, women continue to lag behind men in real wages, in access and legal rights to natural resources such as land, and in access to social resources such as adequate health care, nutrition, education, and credit.

Women and Development

The very word *development* is associated with progress and advancement. Development has become the catch-all term for the transformation of traditional, generally subsistence, economies into modern, cash-based economies. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines development as, "...the process of developing, evolution, growth, maturation,...a stage of advancement; a developed condition, a full-grown state." The nature of the word implies a positive, enhancing process of growth. On one level, this understanding of development cannot be disputed. Who could argue that increased food supplies, greater access to effective medical care, and expanding literacy are not an improvement? Yet, looking a little deeper, a less than glowing picture emerges. Natural resources are rapidly degrading and huge increases in the production of wastes and pollution have occurred. Of special interest in this publication is the widening gap between many of Asia's women and the men in their societies in terms of standard of living and the burden of work (Raju and Bagchi 1993).

Development as a process of achieving a desired goal therefore implies not only growth but also a qualitative change for the better. This idea is implicit in Myrdal's (1968: 168) description of development as "the movement of the whole social system upward." Notions of an improved quality of life, alleviation of poverty, political freedom, protection of ecosystems, equity, and social justice are now considered essential elements of the concept of development.

Gender Roles

Gender is the term used for the socially-constructed roles that we learn based upon our sex. Once these sex-based roles are established, biases can emerge to benefit one group over the other in terms of access to such things as resources and political power. In debunking the presumption that women and men share equally in the costs and the fruits of development, Jacobson (1992) and Williamson-Fien (1993) outline a number of gender-biased myths built into our very notion of development:

1. That within a society, economic growth is gender-blind and both men and women will benefit equally from it.

2. Within households, the burdens of work and poverty or the benefits of increased leisure time and income will be distributed equally regardless of gender.

3. The situation has always been deplorable for women of the developing world, consequently the women of the developing world need to be integrated into the processes of western-style development.

These assumptions reflect the convergence of gender-bias and ethnocentrism of (generally western or westernized) development planners, which serve to perpetuate poverty in the developing world, particularly among women. Essays in this volume counter the misrepresentation of women's experience that the above-mentioned assumptions create. Elahi's essay (Chapter 5) shows that women in Bangladesh do not have the same access to education, nutrition and health services that men do, whereas Wikramasinghe (Chapter 6) and Raghuram (Chapter 7) describe how Sri Lankan and Indian women carry the greater burden of work in their communities. Cartier's description (Chapter 1) of the traditional cultural norms that define women's roles and duties and their low social and economic status in China, is also fairly representative of most other Asian countries. Park's essay (Chapter 2) reveals a reversal of (typical) gender roles on Cheju Island, Korea where women had significantly more social power and control over family resources and work while performing in their traditional roles. In the face of increased western-style development, however, even their economic status is eroding.

How has this happened? A possible answer lies in the combination of the built-in gender biases in each culture and the almost blind adoption of development programs that promotes a Western model of economic growth as the means to improving standards of living. In fact, it is widely believed that development can be achieved by "the faithful imitation of the developed" (Galbraith 1965: 3). A growing realization is that economic growth has led to the depletion of the natural resource base and has heightened inequalities and inequities in society. Those who depend directly on the environment for their sustenance—which most rural people of Asia do—have become poorer. Those who are responsible for deriving the family's basic survival needs from a depleting natural resource base have been hit harder, as can be seen in Chhokar's learning activity on India (Chapter 7).

Every society has a gender-based division of labor. In subsistence societies, in addition to their traditional roles of caring for the home and children, women also contribute significantly to the family's basic survival needs. They are the major suppliers of food, fodder, fuel, and water for their families. In subsistence agriculture, where all the work is done by family labor, women perform most of the labor-intensive and time-consuming tasks. Wickramasinghe documents this in her essay on Sri Lanka (Chapter 6). Based on her fieldwork she estimates that in terms of workload, a woman's contribution to the family unit is at least 32 percent greater than that of the man. Woman's non-domestic work, however, is socially unrecognized, undervalued, and *invisible* in economic statistics because it does not generate a cash income.

Several studies show that in South Asia, Green Revolution technology (a western-style transfer technology in agriculture) was transferred mainly to men, thereby marginalizing women's role in agricultural production (Agarwal 1988). This capital-intensive technology also deepened economic inequalities in society. The technological inputs permitted the diversion of marginal lands to agriculture. Because marginal land has traditionally been communal in usage—and has been used particularly by women—this resource is now denied to them. Also, development policies and projects often focus on producing cash crops, that men, in most cultures, usually control. As food crops give way to cash crops, and as food and other hitherto *free* resources become commodities in the market, a family's need for cash increases. In order to increase cash income, the rural poor—both men and women—are often pressed into laboring in the cash-crop fields of the affluent farmers. The women, however, are still responsible for their traditional roles in food production and in the home. The cash they earn does not always benefit women, or even the children, because men purchase and control consumer products such as radios, watches, tape players, bicycles and motorized vehicles for their own use in the family (Jacobson 1992:13; Hathaway 1993:177). Add to this situation the inevitable degradation of the environment as a result of development efforts. Deforestation, erosion and decline in fertility of soil along with the depletion of groundwater carry a special burden for women as they have to spend more time and travel longer distances than in the past for such necessities as fuelwood, fodder, water, and seasonal gathering that supplements the family's diet.

Women and Migration

Massive migrations often accompany development. Many of the readings and learning activities in this publication discuss such instances. The degradation of the natural resource base, the growing poverty caused by the development process, and the lack of employment opportunities in the villages lead men to migrate to large urban centers for wage labor while women remain in the village to maintain the farm. Now the entire burden of producing food and taking care of children and the elderly is on their shoulders (Cartier, Chapter 1, Wickramasinghe, Chapter 6). In some countries (e.g., China) women head an increasing and alarming proportion of families in rural areas but lack adequate services to assist them. In contrast, wealthier Asian as well as European and North American countries recruit women from several Asian nations (e.g., Sri Lanka and Philippines) as cheap domestic labor and entertainment labor. For the larger part of western Asia, when women do migrate, it is often with their spouses, as explained by Hemmasi in his paper on gender and migration in Iran (Chapter 4). On the other hand, in the so-called miracle economies of eastern (e.g., South Korea and Taiwan) and southeastern (e.g., Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia) Asia, women have provided a cheap and flexible labor pool for international industry. Buang (Chapter 3) notes that in Malaysia large numbers of young rural women are recruited to work for multinational corporations in free trade zones (FTZ) within Malaysia where they are paid lower wages than men and have fewer opportunities for a traditional family life. Yet another example of migration, offered by Chhokar (Chapter 7) from India, highlights the differential effects of migration on men and women.

Finally, when development-related social services are brought into a region, differential access to them based on gender biases already prevalent in the local culture also continues. Education, health clinics, and agricultural technology with the credit to purchase it, are often not available to large segments of the female population (Elahi, Chapter 5).

These essays, and the learning activities that follow, illustrate the various circumstances described above. We selected and created them for this project so that teachers could gain a greater appreciation of the issues involved by using lessons to highlight these issues in high school classrooms. Teachers may want to use the original essays as student reading assignments, or use them as resource material for their teaching preparations. Either way, this particular collection of essays will be useful in that broad coverage is given to Asia (from Iran to Malaysia to Korea), while maintaining a focus on a particular region of Asia (South Asia) for contrast. In addition, they represent a variety of Asian cultural and religious groups (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism), while again focusing on one religious group (Muslim) for contrast and depth.

One final note: through essays and lessons, such as those found in this volume, emphasize to students that the diversity of experiences and circumstances of Asian women are as significant as those they hold in common.

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1

Women and Gender in Contemporary China

Carolyn L. Cartier

Geographical perspectives on gender in China demonstrate a way of understanding how enduring cultural norms about female and male expectations continue to influence a range of contemporary cultural and economic activities. Gender is an active process of social construction in which social values promote particular female and male behaviors and roles among members of a population. Social mores created by particular cultures place values on the meaning of being female, give lesser or greater importance to women and female characteristics for certain situations, jobs, and roles. How men and women are gendered, expectations about their normative societal participation, and their status varies around the world according to the cultural norms of a population group. Work on the geography of gender seeks to comprehend the spatial and place-based manifestations of gendered characteristics.

In China, geography of gender is critical to understanding complex issues of population growth, agricultural productivity, industrialization, and what the United Nations terms basic human rights. This essay considers the origins and evolution of gendered characteristics in China, the general status of women and women's labor, and two case studies, from China and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, recent gains in women's rights over property inheritance demonstrate the intractability of traditional gendered practices even in a highly Westernized legal environment. In China, the focus of the analysis is how the traditional processes of gendering in Confucian society serve to maintain gender roles and gendered forms of labor even under rapid industrialization as traditional family organization transforms.

The low status of women in Asia is a pan-regional problem not limited to China. Examination of population statistics from Pakistan to Japan shows that the numbers of females reported across the region are lower than statistical expectations based on the natural rate of female births (Johansson and Nygren 1991). The numbers of women reported in population censuses at all ages, moreover, are lower than normal size for the human species. Why are women *missing* in this region? Minimal health care and attention, female infanticide, and the generally lower value placed on female life are the main social conditions that have decreased the survival rate of women to the point that an estimated 100 million women are missing in the world, of which 60 million are missing in Asia and half of those missing in Asia are Chinese (Kristoff 1991). (A population of 100 million is five times that of the entire population of Australia, or just more than one-third of all the people in the U.S.) Some Western views of this problem may attribute the low value placed on women's lives to traditional views that should give way once countries go through *modernization*. Johnson, Parish, and Lin (1987) have asserted that increasing rural employment for Chinese women helped to increase their status even in the early twentieth century. Some relatively contemporary Chinese policy statements also suggest that women's road to equality should arrive with industrial modernization (Andors 1983). Such views would hold, for example, that female infanticide could become increasingly rare with access to forms of birth control. But patriarchy—the institutionalization of power through males and male cultural norms—is not a historical problem but a contemporary social condition whose forms endure globally in contemporary contexts. In industrialized Hong Kong, Salaff (1981) found that women working outside the home, whether single or married, regularly surrendered the bulk of their income to their families. Women's income became family resources, rather than providing women independence. The interests of the patriarchal family as a whole determined how the total family income would be allocated. Some Asian versions of patriarchy are especially well entrenched.

The Cultural Construction Of Patriarchy

Origins of the cultural values about the roles of women in the Chinese culture region are related to Confucianism. The place of women in Confucian culture has never been high, since the Confucian hierarchy of social relations placed women below men by definition (Pearson and Leung 1995). As a child, a girl obeyed both her father and brothers. When she married, the focus of her patriarchal obedience transferred to her husband. Widows even obeyed their sons. Confucian teachings about divorce demonstrate how absurdly little power a woman had even in her own marriage. A man could obtain divorce on a range of grounds, including whether he perceived that his wife behaved in a jealous manner, talked excessively, did not serve her in-laws appropriately, if she contracted a disease, or did not give birth to a son.

The historical origins and diffusion of Confucianism help to define its geographical areas of practice. Confucius, a philosopher, lived in Shandong Province in the north central area of eastern China in the sixth century BCE. He established a set of philosophies and a group of followers who introduced Confucian thought to the Korean peninsula, Japan, and Vietnam. Different than a religion, Confucianism is a philosophy that provides definition about proper behavioral conduct and social organization. As a result, similar conditions of social organization are found throughout the East Asian region. The elemental characteristic of family organization in Confucianism is patrilineal descent. Descent through the male line meant throughout rural, Confucian China women left the families of their birth at marriage—and sometimes even earlier in child betrothal—to live in their husband's village. There they became agricultural workers, took care of in-laws, and bore sons. It was common that they would never see their parents again. Indeed the only route to social status for a young woman was to produce sons; the womb became the literal space of women's power. The reductionist thinking of concentrating all causality for fertility in the body of a woman led women to become viewed as objects of production and labor. These basic patterns of gendering in Chinese family organization prevail mostly in rural areas of China today (Croll 1994), but the birth of a son remains a bit more special even in contemporary urban circumstances (WuDunn 1994: 234).

The issues raised in this paper are complex, for they represent simultaneously the tenacity of traditional practice and the opportunities of contemporary change. Some of the examples represent conditions that should have faded with the decline of imperial regimes and the rise of the twentieth century nation-state, but instead, they demonstrate the resurgence of traditional gender patterns in China in the recent period. On one hand, rapid postwar industrialization in the East Asian region has transformed the status of some women and created new professional opportunities that are breaking down the patterns of the past. On the other hand, recent reports from across East Asia demonstrate shifting outcomes of new economies of labor in which the roles and status of women are the most flexible—and most exploited.

At the higher end of the educational spectrum, the roles and status of women show promise. In most cases, however, women's labor is treated like women's wombs: an essential component of the social and economic system in which the function of the female is to be productive, and her problem to bear if productivity fails. In Japan women still hold the vast majority of lower wage non-professional jobs. During the recent recession in Japan, women were the first to be fired (Sanger 1992), and the last to be hired (Blustein 1995). Conditions for women were so obviously bleak that a senior Japanese cabinet official had to acknowledge that "Japanese companies had systematically denied job opportunities to women during the four-year economic downturn (Sanger 1994)." Japan does have a ten-year-old law against sex discrimination. In South Korea the technologies of ultrasound and amniocentesis have been used to identify female fetuses for abortion (Lewin 1990). The use of ultrasound technology for the same purposes was so frequent in China it was declared illegal. Even though science has long revealed that the neutral female egg has nothing to do with the sex of a child, social approbation falls on the woman if she does not reproduce according to preferred custom. Chinese people have traditionally viewed sons as critical for carrying on the family name, for taking care of parents in their old age, for performing the ritual duties of ancestor worship, for farm labor, and generally providing an extra measure of security for the family.

Under the Maoist era that began in 1949, the status of women was supposed to change. The Marxist solution to improving the status of women was through full participation in production (which is not essentially different from the Western view in market economies that women gain greater equality when they achieve economic independence). Women received independent recognition for their agricultural labor and other activities through the commune system. The new Marriage Law in 1950 gave women the right to seek divorce. But the revolution for women was to be postponed in China (Wolf 1985). Theory did not translate into practice, as husbands, mothers-in-law, and party cadres moved to keep women in line, and prevented them from initiating divorce (Croll 1978: 22). Stacey (1983) particularly concludes that social practices of traditional gendering continued through the Maoist period.

How should the role of Confucianism in the maintenance of gender traditions be understood in East Asia today? New patterns of familial organization are emerging in urban areas, where couples are more likely to live on their own and both husband and wife work outside the home. Traditional cultural norms have given way to more secular practices in all parts of the industrialized world, and the East Asian region is under especially rapid transformation. In 1979 China changed course, and began the introduction of economic reforms that have completely transformed how the country's economy operates. China reformed both its domestic and its international economic policies, opened the country to foreign investment, and set the goal of becoming an industrialized country by the first half of the twenty-first century. Thousands of foreign companies have responded by investing in China to take advantage of low cost operations: the costs of labor and leasing land are considerably cheaper than anywhere else in East Asia. Even when transportation costs are added, it regularly costs less to have products made in China and shipped around the world.

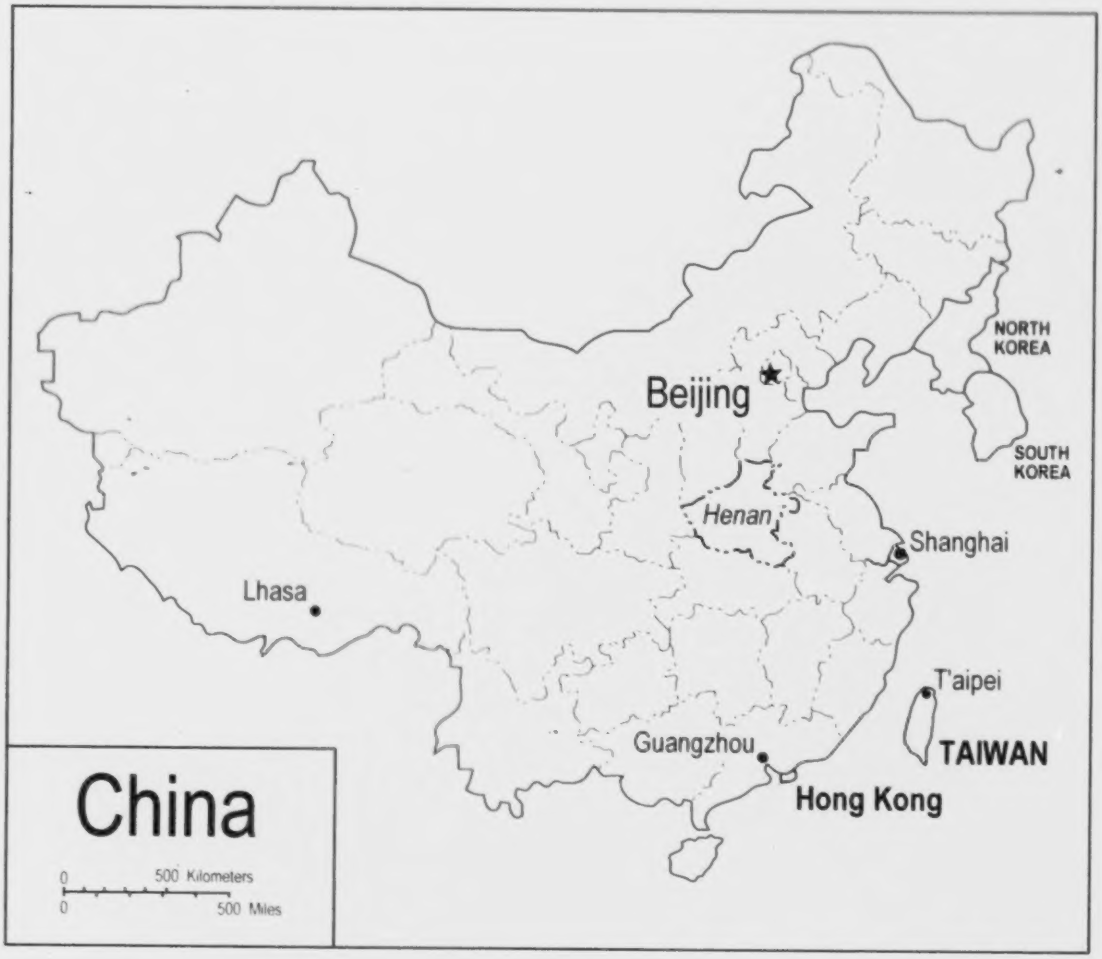
Women's Place in the Asian Division of Labor

Women tend to comprise the lower-paid half of the work force in the Asian region, and are regularly categorized as "secondary workers" (Ong 1991). As secondary workers women generally receive lower wages than men at comparable ranks and tend to engage in manufacturing work in their teens and twenties before marriage. At some factories in industrial zones large numbers of young single women live in nearby dormitories, which allows long hours and overtime work. Male gendered jobs are supervisors, technicians, and labor contractors, so that the women factory workers are supervised by men. This situation recreates the patriarchal hierarchy of the family social system that promotes a disciplined and highly controlled labor force. Even in Hong Kong it is still common to discriminate in hiring based on age and sex (Poon 1995).

To understand the basic reasons behind the importance of women's labor in the East Asian region, consider the essential comparative economic conditions in Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Figure 1.1). Within this region economic conditions vary considerably. In a hierarchy of economic development, Japan is the strongest economy in the region. The cost of wages in Japan is high, and the country's major manufacturing companies have invested widely in other East Asian countries where costs are lower—most recently in China. The second tier of industrial manufacturing is South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, places generally termed Newly Industrialized Economies (NIEs). The NIEs gained their global economic prominence based on a strategy developed in Japan: export-oriented industrialization. In this economic development strategy countries plan to export manufactured goods to earn foreign exchange that they can use to meet a variety of domestic needs. Many multinational corporations, like Ford Motor Company and the Liz Claiborne clothing company have operations in these NIEs. U.S. companies first went to places like Taiwan and Hong Kong to manufacture their products cheaply and to create new markets, but in the past two decades, the economies of Hong Kong and Taiwan have grown so much that they are no longer places of low wage manufacturing activity. Indeed, nearly all of Hong Kong's manufacturing of toys, electronics, and clothing has moved across the border to China. As a result, thousands of women have lost jobs in the Hong Kong manufacturing sector, and the women who have remained unemployed the longest are middle-aged (Poon 1995).

Many of Hong Kong's manufacturing jobs have gone to new factories in Guangdong province (in nearby southeastern China). These factories are concentrated in the special economic zones of Shenzhen and Zhuhai (Xiangzhou), places that have become primary destinations of hundreds of thousands of migrants from all over China seeking manufacturing jobs. Since the manufacturing workers are about three-quarters women, the population in these zones exhibits an unusual concentration of young single women migrants. When Hong Kong jobs crossed the border so did Hong Kong businessmen. These demographic patterns have given rise to new transborder relationships and *marriages of convenience* in such large numbers that the Chinese government has considered creating a law to stop them. Part of what drives the new pattern of transborder social relations is the comparative regional economy. The cost of living in Shenzhen, a comparatively high-cost place within China, is at most half the average cost of living in Hong Kong. It is relatively cheap and probably a good investment to lease a flat in Shenzhen, where many Hong Kong men spend five days a week at work and are creating new social problems because many of the Chinese wives are second wives. Men married in Hong Kong are effectively resuscitating the traditional Chinese custom of minor wives. In traditional China, the most practical reason for second wives was to ensure the birth of sons, but minor wives and concubines were also a social status symbol for wealthy men. Entire districts of multistory flats represent this new *custom* in Shenzhen, where locals call at least one new housing development *Ernai Cun*, or "Second Wife Village" (McNamara 1995). As a result, the rate of divorce in Hong Kong is rising.

China's large population and comparatively low standard of living has meant no shortage of people willing to work at low wages. China also instituted the stringent birth control policy, the *one child policy* during the economic reform period. The one child policy is designed to slow China's population growth and promote the attainment of zero population growth by the middle of the twenty-first century. The policy requires the state to carefully monitor births, but in reality the state has kept only families in urban areas to the one-child restriction. Rural farming families may still have two, and in some cases, three children. Although the one child policy had definitely slowed the birth rate in China, so many families have continued to attempt to have a son that unregistered female births have become a new social problem. This undocumented so-called "black population" is estimated to be as high as tens of millions (Yabuki 1995: 15). At the same time, the one-child policy has continued to result in lower than natural female births, as a result of abortion or premature deaths. In the future, two major problems will arise from these conditions. One, females, who from birth lack formal government registration, may lose opportunities in education, health care, and other basic services, let alone higher education and better jobs. Two, a shortage of women creates new social problems as the population enters marriageable age. China's population statistics already show a demographic imbalance: the ratio of females to males is 100:114. Among the single population over thirty, single men outnumber single women by nearly ten to one (Zhang 1995).


Beijing
NORTH KOREA
SOUTH KOREA
Henan
Shanghai
Lhasa
T'aipei
TAIWAN
Guangzhou
Hong Kong
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1.1 China and Its Neighbors

The Places of Women in China Under Reform

The problem of the shortage of females in rural China has already emerged in some areas of the country, where local men are trying to purchase wives from remote locations. Sheryl WuDunn, former Beijing-based correspondent for the *New York Times*, describes in plain, raw terms the worst conditions for women in China in the 1980s and 1990s: a commodity trade in women and children (WuDunn 1994: 210-240). In 1990 the Chinese government reported that it investigated 18,692 cases of the sale of women. In 1989 and 1990, 65,236 people were arrested for trafficking in women and children, mostly girls. These figures indicate only the number of cases officially identified; the total numbers of women and children involved are likely higher. WuDunn endeavored to find out why more women sold into forced marriages do not run away, and found the example of a woman in Shandong Province (northeast China) who tried to flee three times: the third time her husband gouged out her eyes. Most Chinese in major cities would like to write off such practices to uncivilized peasants of remote impoverished rural areas, but the kidnapping of a graduate student in Shanghai to be sold to an eager bachelor farmer in central China had people everywhere alarmed. The market in women is as close as the capital. A pick-up labor market in Beijing has developed where men and women from outlying areas come to look for casual work., a place where potential employers and labor brokers come to find women who will work as maids and nannies in newly prosperous Beijing homes, or assembly work in low wage manufacturing. During 1993, a single gang abducted 1,800 women from the Beijing labor market to be sold in rural Shanxi Province (north-central China).

WuDunn's conclusion is that although women, like men, may have greater economic opportunities in China since the introduction of economic reforms and market-based economic principles, they are also facing more discrimination. The lowest paid factory jobs are usually filled by women. In rural areas it is common now for men to engage in some higher wage occupation in urban areas, such as construction work, and leave the manual labor of farming to women. Women, children, and old folks form the bulk of the population in some rural places. Since the reforms, the dropout rate for school age girls is rising, as families encourage daughters to start engaging in work to contribute to the family income (Croll 1994: 165). Some women welcome the change. Hao Liuping, a farmer in Hebei province (north-central China), explained to a Hong Kong journalist that she prefers the new household arrangement in which her husband works most of the year in a Beijing coal brick factory (Becker 1995). He returns home for the harvest, but otherwise Hao tends the farm. Together they have two incomes and a higher standard of living than ever; they have built a new house. In the Maoist era, this situation never could have occurred since rural people were not allowed to migrate to urban areas. Under the period of economic reform, men have migrated to cities in much greater numbers than women that the majority of China's agricultural labor is now performed by women. In some provinces, such as Jiangsu and Shangdong (north-central coastal China), women constitute eighty to ninety percent of the agricultural labor force (Carino 1995: 36). A new magazine, *Rural Women Knowing All*, has been launched to chronicle the transformation and help women cope with their new lives. Whether the status of women will rise under this new division of agricultural labor is debatable. Some husbands of successful village women become members of village committees while their wives work ever longer hours. Village politics remains a male domain (Carino 1995: 39). Most agricultural work in China is still not mechanized and farming is back-breaking work. Hard physical labor is not easily viewed as a road to emancipation. Some women, however, find new status in taking charge of the land, the primary resource of rural China. Another law of the Maoist period gave women the right to inherit land after 1954, but in practice the law never took effect. Recently, though, since it is more common for even rural families not to have sons, land leaseholds (land is technically owned by the state) have passed to daughters (Becker 1995). The future implications of women becoming in charge of China's food production will be important to understand at several scales, from the local scene to the global level of the world food supply.

Overturning Legalized Patriarchy

In the New Territories of Hong Kong, just a few miles inland from one of the world's most dynamic and internationalized cities, an imperial law of China's Qing dynasty (1644-1911) that denied women property inheritance rights was recently overturned. Traditional law held sway without considerable question in the New Territories area of the British colony until 1991 when a Hong Kong lawyer took on the old inheritance law in the case of a 43 year-old woman who was being harassed to leave her family home after her parents died (Gargan 1995). Cheng Lai-sheung, an acupuncturist, wanted to remain in her family's village house, but her two brothers, who had moved out of the village, decided to sell the property. (The New Territories location is near the Shenzhen special economic zone border, where land prices have been appreciating handsomely.) Despite her wishes, they went ahead with the sale. New owners moved in, and Ms. Cheng held onto the third floor. Finally, after considerable harassment, Ms. Cheng moved out. Meanwhile, Christine Loh Kung-wai, lawyer, former commodities trader for Salomon Brothers, Inc. and member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, argued successfully in court to replace Qing rule: in 1994 the inheritance law in force in the rest of Hong Kong was extended throughout the New Territories. Although her case was successful, Ms. Loh reported that male villagers accused her of destroying their culture. They threatened to rape and beat her. Even some of her fellow members of the Legislative Council protested her activities. News media publicized the case around the world as an anachronism, a vestige of imperial China tucked away in a corner of this now former British colony.

The male villagers in this case are members of the Heung Yee Kuk, an organization of wealthy landowners in the New Territories that has been recognized as an advisory body to the Hong Kong government since 1926 (Jones 1995). The Heung Yee Kuk effectively ruled over the New Territories and acted as the area's legitimate political representation. The organization has 131 members. Six are Legislative Council members, where they came into direct contact with Christine Loh. The existing law that prohibited female inheritance was a 1910 British ordinance that supported preserving local ways of life, a measure that helped prevent local opposition to colonial rule. Jones (1995: 173) writes: "The struggle to change discriminatory inheritance laws in the New Territories provides a paradigm case for our understanding of how vested interests and dominant values have intersected colonial rule to reproduce this system of settled inequalities." In this case the vested interest was the Heung Yee Kuk and the dominant values of a patriarchal perspective. The threat of rape toward Councillor Loh, Jones points out, was made, shockingly, on television. In 1994, in British-ruled Hong Kong, a traditional Chinese patriarchal organization dared to suggest a violent act toward a woman who failed to comply with patriarchal authority. Ms. Loh asserted an alternative view of power that diluted the hegemony of traditional male-gendered forms. The majority of Hong Kong residents, who reside outside the New Territories, favored overturning the final remains of traditional Chinese law. The British crown colony of Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

Conclusion

In 1995, the NGO (non-governmental organization) forum of the United Nations World Conference on Women convened in China outside Beijing at a small city called Huairou, a suburb on the northwest fringe of the capital. The NGO forum, like the subsequent meetings for government leaders, was supposed to take place in Beijing. Just a few months before the conference was to convene, China, citing a lack of facilities in the capital, announced that the NGO forum had to be moved to Huairou. Women's organizations around the world protested, and China watchers were skeptical about the official line. Alternative explanations emerged. Most persuasively, the Hong Kong press explained that Chinese premier Li Peng, alarmed at the realization that NGO groups would stage public demonstrations, realized that protests had to be prevented in Tiananmen Square (Nickerson 1995). The NGO forum had to be relocated outside the city. China has hardly any NGOs of its own.

China's timing on the decision making about the location of the NGO forum suggests a certain lack of preparedness. The activities of United Nations conferences regularly include NGO activities. When China tendered the offer to host the UN World Conference on Women, what China wanted primarily was the international recognition that comes with hosting a United Nations conference—not the potential disruption of NGO politics. I was in China during the conference, hundreds of miles away at a university on the south China coast, frustrated that my multiple responsibilities kept me from Beijing. I read the Chinese and English language papers each day, but press reports never covered the activities of the NGO meetings. A few weeks before the conference began, the Chinese press started to report on programs around the country that sought to enhance the status of women. This type of coverage continued throughout the conference, while Chinese television coverage featured views of conference entertainment. Finally, I was able to obtain first-hand reports of conference activities from an American professor of journalism who had just returned from Huairou. She was a veteran of the meetings, having attended her first UN Conference on Women in Nairobi ten years earlier. She explained how media executives of the major U.S. newspapers met at the NGO forum in Huairou to determine what conference issues should be covered. What they literally discussed is "what is news." Their collective decisions about what to publish about the conference included the weather (Chinese officials promised the weather would be fine at this largely outdoor site, but participants instead found themselves subject to a deluge), the conditions of the facilities, and famous women participants. The topics of the meetings—like the complex problems of patriarchy and gender relations around the world—were not considered newsworthy concerns.

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Learning Activity

Holding up More Than Half the Sky: A Woman's Place in China

Carolyn V. Prorok

Introduction:

Even though women constitute less than half the population in the People's Republic of China, they carry a disproportionate burden for their society in terms of reproduction (China's population policy) and production (working longer hours for lower wages than men). In this lesson students will learn about the historic role of women in China, and that the Communist doctrine of granting equal rights to women has not had a noticeable effect in the face of China's population policy and economic liberalization.

Grade Level: 10-12

Time Required: 2-3 classes

Standards*: The geographically informed person knows and understands:
10. the characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.
17. how to apply geography to interpret the past.
18. how to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

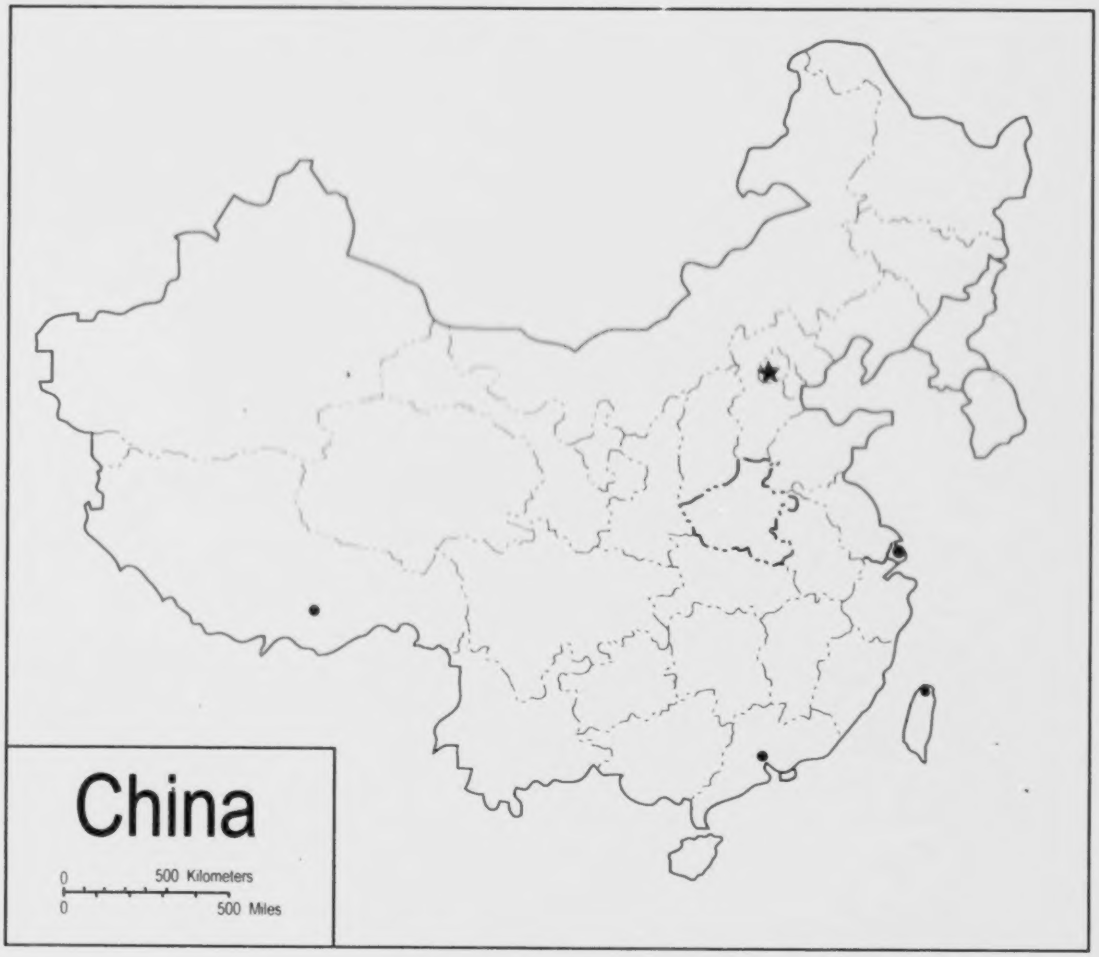
Skills*:
- to be able to ask social and demographic questions from a geographic perspective.
- acquire information from diverse sources
- organize primary and secondary information in a manner that illuminates a geographic perspective
- analyze geographic information
- answer geographic questions

Geographic Vocabulary and Concepts:
patriarchy, Confucian philosophy, gender, NIE (Newly Industrialized Economy), Mao Ze Dong, polygamy, sex ratio

Objectives: As a result of completing this learning activity, students will:
- understand the fundamental role that geographical context has played in affecting events in the historic role of women in China
- understand how to determine a population's sex ratio
- learn how a combination of government policy and traditional attitudes can influence a country's population growth and sex ratio

Materials:
Cartier's background reading for teachers (Chapter 1 in this publication), guided imagery text, selected population data from China and the United States; maps of China and outline map of China (Figure 1.2).

**Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* 1994. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS). (Available from NCGE Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pa. 15705-1087 for $7.00 per copy.)


China
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500 Kilometers
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1.2 China

The Learning Activity:

Background:

In this lesson, students will explore the historic position of women in China through a guided imagery activity, and they will interpret the present position of women in China through an analysis of sex ratio data in combination with information provided by the teacher. Finally, students will use contemporary sex ratios to interpret the future of China's population and potential social conditions. If this learning activity is incorporated into a larger unit on China, then much of the necessary background on Confucianism and China's traditional economy is assumed. Otherwise, you may have to introduce these topics to your students. Blank maps are provided in case the teacher needs to introduce students to the location of China and associated place names.

DAY 1:

Introducing the Activity:

1. Ask students to think about what it might be like to live in China a long time ago (you can specify the time period if you like). Then have them write down three things they think a woman would experience in her lifestyle at that time. Give students only 2-3 minutes to do this. Now have students turn to a neighbor and compare lists. Again, only 2-3 minutes are necessary. Process the lists by calling on students and writing some of their responses on the chalk board. Their responses may or may not signal the next stage of this learning activity. If they do, then use the chalk board list as a transition into the next step. If they do not, then discuss which of their answers were appropriate and suggest the following activity as another window on the life of a Chinese woman. This should take no more than 5-10 minutes.

Executing the Activity:

2. You will read aloud the guided imagery text provided with the learning activity.** Note the following introductory comments for your students. This will take approximately 5 minutes. The guided imagery will take approximately 7-9 minutes. Read the excerpt to yourself several times in advance to familiarize yourself with it.

**Excerpted from the book *Thousand Pieces of Gold* by Ruthanne Lum McCunn. New York: Beacon Press, 1988.

Explain to students: This is a true story of a young woman born in northern China in the late nineteenth century. Her father lovingly calls her his treasure, or his thousand pieces of gold, and promises never to sell her. But, when Lalu is 13 years old in 1871, famine strikes China and he is forced by bandits to sell her for a bag of seeds. She is eventually sold as a slave in Shanghai and is auctioned to a saloonkeeper in Idaho where she eventually earns her freedom and lives out the rest of her life. The following excerpt begins when her father's crop has just failed for the first time.

Evaluating the Activity:

3. Allow students five minutes to respond to the excerpt in their notebooks with a passage similar to a journal entry. This might be a stream of consciousness type of entry.

Concluding the Activity:

4. Encourage discussion by using the following questioning strategy (10 minutes):

a. What have you learned about traditional China through Lalu's experience? How does a disaster or great pressure on essential resources (such as famine) affect people's situation and decisions given their traditional way of life?

b. Have there been situations in the United States where people were sold because of who they were? If so, who and what were the circumstances? (African slaves, Chinese railroad laborers, even today babies are sometimes sold)

c. Do you think the situation for women has changed in present-day China? Why or Why not? Inform students that the Communist government of China has banned foot binding, polygamy, and the selling of people. (This last question will set up the second part of the lesson.)

DAY 2:

Introducing the Activity:

1. Explain to students that China has the largest population in the world with more than one billion people. Government officials are concerned that China will have insufficient resources to support an increased population, so the government instituted a policy of one child per couple (with few exceptions) in order to slow down population growth. Families must pay heavy fines or even lose their belongings if they do not follow this policy. The result of this policy is that women are hounded by government officials if they are suspected of illegally being pregnant, and privately even more pressure is put on women by their families and neighbors to have a son. This causes the sex ratio to be skewed in favor of men.

Executing the Activity:

2. On the chalk board list the following population data from the 1990 census of China and the U.S.:

	Males (millions)	Females (millions)
Total		
China	581.82	548.69
1-4 years	61.05	55.34
United States	121.17	127.56
1-4 years	7.71	7.35

Tell students that they are going to figure out the sex ratio for China from this data. The sex ratio is the number of men in a population for every 100 females. In order to figure out the sex ratio of China you will need to divide the number of men by the number of women in the country. (Teacher: This will yield a number of 1.06, which means that there are 106 men for every 100 women in China. In the U.S. the ratio will be .95, which means that there are 105 women for every 100 men).

3. Present the following data to your students and have them figure out the sex ratio. (You can retrieve data for your home state from the U.S. Census web site or from the most recent U.S. Census of Population of your state.)

City/State	Population	Males	Females
Beijing	Total	5,590,000	5,230,000
Beijing	Age 1-4	420,000	390,000
Henan	Total	43,800,000	41,700,000
Henan	Age 1-4	5,250,000	4,600,000
Pennsylvania	Total	5,693,222	6,188,421
Pennsylvania	Age 1-4	338,465	320,075
New York Metro	Total	5,437,344	6,026,361
New York Metro	Age 1-4	330,950	317,838

Concluding the Activity:

4. Guide a discussion about the results of this exercise: When students have completed this step, explain that it is normal that there will be more women than men in a given population because women tend to live longer than men. Also, it is natural for more boy babies to be born than girl babies, but because more boys are born with congenital diseases and other medical problems that cause premature death, there are usually an almost even number of boys and girls by the time they are older children. Now have students figure out the sex ratio for children between the ages of 1-4. The answer will be 1.10 for China: meaning that there are 110 boys for every 100 girls. In the U.S. the ratio is 1.05. Ask students to compare the ratios for small children to the adult population. Have students brainstorm the social implications of sex ratio imbalance for both countries and what, if anything, should be done to bring sex ratios into balance. Use information from Cartier's article to guide this discussion.

The following questions might be useful depending on the amount of each student's background.

a. Are sex ratios in the United States and China similar or different? How are they similar or different? Are rural versus urban populations similar or different for both countries?

b. Why are sons preferred in traditional Chinese culture? Has Confucian philosophy played a role in this attitude? Does the preference for sons mean that daughters are not wanted and loved in their families? What do you think happened to create the imbalance in China's sex ratio?

c. What role did Mao De Zong and the Communist party play in changing some traditional practices regarding women? Give examples.

d. Are laws that guarantee equality sufficient to change discrimination? How or why not? Give examples (in China and in the U.S.). For example; why do women get paid less for working longer hours than men? Is this a problem found only in China? Why or why not?

e. Does famine and a severe government population policy have similarities in their effect on women's lives in China? If so, How? or In what way?

f. What does this show about the persistence of very strong traditional attitudes? What do you think it will take for these attitudes to change? Do we have such strong traditions in the U.S.? Give an example.

Evaluating the Activity:

5. As a homework assignment ask students to write an essay, short story, or poem, or produce a poster size illustration on the future of China's women. They should take into account what they have already learned, changes that they imagine might take place, and how changes in women's position in China could affect the whole world.

Extending the Activity:

Have students read and write a book report on the entire book, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*. Look for other biographies and autobiographies of Chinese women for your students to read.

Or, have students read: "The old sexism in the new China," from the *U.S. News and World Report*, April 24, 1989. They should investigate the basis of the article and write a short report (Teachers may find this article informative and helpful for this lesson).

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Guided Imagery Text:

Lalu's Story

Ruthann Lum McCunn

Note to the Teacher: For a guided imagery exercise to be effective, minimize external stimuli so that students can focus on your voice and what you are reading to them. To facilitate this, try to make the classroom as non-stimulating as possible by having students put all materials away, closing the door and dimming the lights if necessary.

Tell students: Today we are going to imagine what it might be like to be a young woman in late nineteenth-century China during a time of famine. Please close your eyes, relax in your chairs, and listen carefully to what I am going to say. Imagine in your minds what I am describing.

Before, they had somehow always scraped together the land tax. This time, with the farm so heavily mortgaged,... they could not. Unless. What was it the farmers had said? "Good thing his daughter is so pretty." "Just the right age to fetch a good price." Her father was going to sell her, and... her mother dared say nothing, for if her father did not pay the land tax, he would be sent to prison, and without him, the family would starve.

All Lalu's training in the four virtues of a woman told her she must accept the inevitable. She must be sold so the family could live. Nevertheless, her mind raced like a cornered rat searching for escape. There had to be some other way. She crawled out from under the quilt.... Lalu slipped off the bed and stood in front of her father. "I'm not too small. I'll work with you."

Her father brushed loose strands of hair from her forehead, his touch full of tender regret. "Lalu, in this district women don't work in the fields. You know that."

"They do during harvest."

"That's different," he said heavily. "Only sons become farmers."

"I won't be a farmer, just your helper..."

"We'd be the laughingstock of the whole village," he replied.

"We already are." Immediately regretting her words, Lalu burrowed her head into her father's chest. Water squeezed from his rain-soaked clothes, spreading coldly over her, but she felt only the fierce pounding of his heart beneath her cheek. "Baba, I beg you. Let me help you. I don't want to be..." She stopped, unable to say the word sold. "To go away," she finally whispered.

Months later: Her eyes brimmed with tears. It didn't matter that the farmers said her father was turning Heaven and Earth upside down by allowing his daughter to work by his side. Or that their wives told her mother, "Your daughter's face is passable, but those big feet are laughable." ...Her mother sighed. "The villagers are right. We should have sold you."

"No Mama. You don't mean that."

As though Lalu was a child again, her mother pulled Lalu's outer jacket over her bodice. "Don't you know I say that for your sake, not mine?" she scolded gently. "If we had sold you, we would have found you a good mistress, one not too far away, and you would be doing decent woman's work in a good household, not bitter labor."

"But I love working in the fields," Lalu protested.

"And when you became of age, your mistress would have found you a good husband, and you would have been free again. Now you're neither snake or dragon. You are a woman, yet you work like a man, a, laborer. Who will marry you?"

"I don't care. I'm happy, really I am."

"You're a woman. You should be growing sons, not vegetables."

……

Much later famine has gripped the countryside and bandits are roaming freely:

"BANDITS!" The farmers scattered, racing for their homes and hiding places. Lalu, her legs weak from months of hunger and cramped from squatting, limped after them....

"There's no time to take the little ones away. You'll have to hide in the fertilizer pit," her fathered ordered...She ran across the courtyard and into the house.... Bang! The door shook, showering dust and bits of thatch onto Lalu and her father. "OPEN UP!" a voice roared.... Quick, behind the stove," her father said.... Through a crack, she saw the door burst open and a bandit stride in, kicking aside the splintered crossbar.

"What are you hiding?" he demanded. "Nothing," Lalu's father replied....Rough hands yanked Lalu out and threw her down. Her father bent to help her.... The bandit kicked her father.... Lalu's father sank to his knees. "Please, I beg you. Let her go."

"Don't worry, I'll pay you for this little fox."

Lalu gasped.

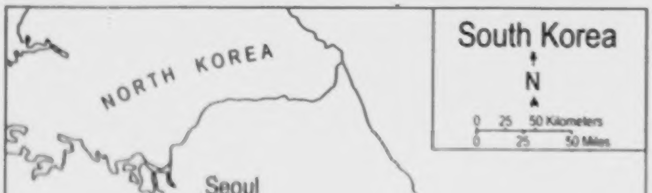
"She's not for sale," her father said....Lalu stiffened...and heard her father groan. She gritted her teeth, determined not to show her fear....(The bandit) threw a bag in front of Lalu's father. It burst, scattering soybeans. Lalu stared at her father, willing him not to pick them up. He reached out, hesitated, then looked up at Lalu, his eyes pleading for understanding. She twisted her face away, a sob strangling in her throat. Behind her; she heard him snatch the bag and scoop up the spilled seed.

2

Women and Development on Cheju Island, South Korea

Siyoung Park

Located 60 miles (97 km) south of the Korean Peninsula, the volcanic island of Cheju has a beautiful natural setting and a mild climate (Figure 2.1). Known as the "Hawaii of Korea," or the "Isle of the Gods," Cheju received international acclaim in July 1975 when *Newsweek* magazine cited it as, "...one of the few truly unspoiled tourism destinations in the world." The island has been recognized as the prime destination for Korean honeymooners, and has become a popular vacation place for affluent Seoul residents, who live less than an hour away by plane. The island, surrounded by the clear, aqua-blue ocean and white sand beaches, is rather different from the rest of Korea, which has a mid-latitude continental climate with humid hot summers and cold winters. The differences are not only climatic, however, but cultural. Peninsular Korea has a male-dominated Confucian society. In Cheju, women have historically been the major economic providers for the family through their work in fishing and farming. For centuries, women in Cheju have been skillful divers who gathered shellfish, edible seaweeds, and abalones, while men customarily kept house and took care of their children. The purpose of this study is to examine the unusual form of gender roles in Cheju and to see how recent economic development on the island is changing them.



2.1 South Korea

Life on Cheju Island

An old saying in Cheju mentions it as a land of "Three Scarcities and Three Plenties." The three scarcities are water, beggars, and thieves. Cheju is a volcanic island covered with basalt boulders, some cinder cones, where lava still flows. The largest volcanic mountain is Mt. Halla, located in the center of the island. Water is a scarce commodity and is found only in springs along the coast where subsistence fishing and farming villages are located. This rocky, volcanic island does not provide much farmland, and subsistence farmers own only small plots of land. Surrounded by a large continental shelf and a long coastline, people have naturally turned to the ocean for food, such as fish, shellfish, and kelp.

Cheju is also called the island of three *plenties*: rocks, wind, and women. Because of the fierce wind, people tie down the roofs of their traditional houses with ropes. Abundant basalt boulders are carefully piled up along the fields to protect crops from the wind, and even cemeteries have walls around them for the same reason. Historically, Cheju Island has had more females than males in its population, which may reflect the traditional preference for the female on this island. According to Cheju's population census, the ratio of males to females was 59 to 100 in 1958, when Cheju society was still quite traditional. This was in sharp contrast to 101 men per 100 women at that time on the Korean Peninsula. The high female ratio continuously declined during the 1960s when Cheju society began to assimilate to the rest of Korea. (This proportionally gradual decline is illustrated in Table 2.1). More than three decades later, in 1990, the ratio of males had increased to 98 per 100 females, still slightly lower than the Korean average of 102 men for 100 women.

Table 2.1. Population Growth of Cheju Do

Year	Total Population (1,000 persons)	Number of Males per 100 Females
1958	264	76
1961	282	83
1965	326	88
1970	366	92
1975	412	93
1980	463	96
1985	489	96
1990	515	98

Source: *Cheju Province Statistical Yearbook* 1991.

For at least 1,500 years, women divers have harvested shellfish and edible seaweed from the bottom of the ocean off the coast of Korea using unique diving methods. They traditionally wore loose cotton garments, and their equipment consisted of a rope basket attached to a gourd that served as a float. They did not use the specialized diving equipment employed in many other parts of the world.

Each coastal village divides its fishing and catching grounds carefully extending from the coastal village seaward to the deep ocean. The local Divers Association oversees the care of this shallow sea by cleaning the ocean floor, planting seabeds with small shells, sowing, and stocking. The boundary of the village fishing ground is carefully designated. In the rare case of a woman marrying someone from another village, she relinquishes her fishing rights in her old village. She can then catch at her husband's village fishing ground. This rule is strictly followed and violators are heavily fined. Divers as a group like to go on long-distance fishing trips to places where local people do not practice diving. Kim *et al.* (1986) reported that, until the middle of the twentieth century, many of Cheju's divers made long-term migratory fishing trips for several months to the Korean mainland, Japan, and even to the coasts of Russia and China to find a better catch. One older diver mentioned her previous trips to Shandong Province, China and how much land she could buy with the money she earned from such long-distance fishing trips (Kim, *et al.* 1986: 155).

Cheju women divers, called *henyo*, meaning women of the sea, dive to the bottom of the ocean for abalone, lobster, octopus, and various kinds of sea weeds. The diving ability of Cheju women has gained the special interest of scientists, and according to a physiological study published in *Scientific American*, they are the most skillful, natural divers in the world (Hong and Rahn 1967). They sometimes descend to depths of 80 feet and can hold their breath for up to two minutes. These breath-holding divers come up only for a brief rest—and only a few breaths of air—and can repeatedly dive for about four hours a day. Today henyo wear a wet suit with fins and carry white styrofoam with a net, which replaces the traditional gourd as a floating device.

Henyo practice two types of diving: along the shallow sea and further out in the ocean from a boat. To prepare for a dive, henyo hyperventilate for five to ten seconds, take a final deep breath, and then make the plunge. In hyperventilating, the women purse their lips and make a loud whistle with each expiration (Hong and Rahn 1967). These whistles, which sound like birds chirping, can be heard for long distances and have become the trademark of the henyo.

Henyo usually dive about 18 days a month from March to September, and from October to February when they average about 8 days a month. Since wet suits became available to all divers in the 1970s, water temperatures no longer limit their activities, and they can dive year round. Henyo seldom dive alone, and usually about twenty women dive together and keep track of each other (Kim *et al.* 1986).

According to tradition, all girls learned to dive as they were growing up by playing along the beach in their fishing villages. Diving was collective work, and training began in peer groups. At about the age of twelve girls learned to dive with some guidance from their mothers. At about sixteen, the girls obtained the lowest level of their three levels of diving skill. Most mothers passed on their own diving equipment as heirlooms and helped train their daughters. By twenty years of age, they became experts and dived all the time. Even childbirth did not keep them away from diving for any longer than two weeks. Henyo are competitive in trying to find more and better sea products than their fellow divers. Abalone is considered the best catch. Women over 60 years old still dive, and areas are designated for elderly women divers. Older women continue to dive because they deem it exciting and adventurous (Kim *et al.* 1986).

The number of henyo has started to decline since 1970. As a consequence of fewer girls becoming henyo, the median age of the divers is getting older. According to a survey in 1969 (Table 2.2), 31 percent of divers were under the age 30, whereas 33 percent were between 30-39, 22 percent between 40-49, and five percent were more than 60 years old. By 1983, Cheju Island experienced a drastic decline in divers under the age of 30 (only 10 percent of the total), 24 percent were in the 30-39 group, 37 percent were aged 40-49, and 7 percent were more than 60 years old. In 1969, the majority of henyo belonged in the 30-39 age group, but by 1983 the majority were in the 40-49 age group (Kim *et al.* 1986).

Table 2.2. Women Divers by Age

Age	1969 (%)	1983 (%)
14-19	8.2	1.2
20-29	23.1	8.9
30-39	33.1	24.2
40-49	21.8	37.1
50-59	9.3	21.8
60 and over	4.6	6.8
Total Number (by People)	14,143	7,885

Source: *Cheju Province Statistical Yearbook* 1991.

The drastic decline in the younger age group is a concern to the Henyo Association and is a clear indicator that the future of the henyo tradition in Cheju is in trouble. The age group of 14-19 is the apprentice age, and only one percent of the total number of henyo was in the group in 1983. The same survey indicated that mothers did not want their daughters to be divers and sent them to high school at the age of their diving training. Modern mothers view being a diver as a rough and dangerous life and want their daughters to have more comfortable jobs. In the 1980s, when the island's economy changed from a farming and fishing subsistence economy to one of commercial farming, and more recently towards a tourism-oriented economy, the lifestyle expectations of young girls also changed.

Role of Women in the Cheju Household

In traditional Cheju families the mother is the core of the household. The family has been a stable unit based upon females, many of whom were the sole supporters of their families. A survey of a coastal village in 1975 revealed that, out of a total 340 households, 115 (33.8 percent) were female-headed (Cho 1976). Another study showed that in 1965 (Kim *et al.* 1986), 37.5 percent of Cheju households were headed by women. When women would leave on migratory travels from two to five months, households and children were left in the charge of husbands. Divers today recall that when their mothers were busy diving, fathers performed household chores such as cooking, taking care of the children, and farming.

Divers' families are engaged in fishing and subsistence farming, but fishing brings in the main income and this activity has been dominated by women. Through a traditionally strong Divers Association and governmental Fishery Cooperatives, divers sold most of their excess product to Japan. With the help of cooperatives, divers spend part of their income on improving their diving materials as well as for household expenses or children's education (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Fishery Workers and Divers in Cheju

Year	Cheju Total Population	Fishery Workers (A)	% of Total Population	Divers (B)	% of Total Fishery Workers (B/A)
1965	326,406	30,147	9.2	23,081	76.6
1970	365,522	37,107	10.2	23,930	64.5
1975	412,021	20,572	5.0	11,316	55.0
1980	462,755	12,216	2.6	8,850	72.4
1985	488,576	11,320	2.3	6,695	59.1
1990	514,608	9,659	1.9	6,835	70.8

Source: *Cheju Province Statistical Yearbook* 1991.

Cheju society is rooted not only in its economy, but Confucianism also has had a strong influence on cultural behavior. Compared with their hard-working women, Cheju men tended to lead quiet lives. Leisure for men is not necessarily considered a vice. Confucian ideology supports male dominance in the legal system, ascribing a man as head of family, despite his less significant economic role. Ownership of farming plots, therefore, is under the husband's name. With a referent signature men can also borrow money from the Cooperatives.

Chesa, the major Confucian ritual that commemorates patrilineal ancestors, reflects one element of male dominance in Cheju society. Only male members of the family can participate in this ritual that expresses filial piety and celebrates patrilineal continuity. *Chesa* serves as the basis of the societal power structure. This exclusively male-oriented ceremony is the most important activity in which men are engaged, and a good performance and getting ready for *chesa* are the main purposes of their lives (Cho 1979). Men's dominant role in religious society, which is manifested in the participation of such rituals, is somewhat similar to what other anthropologists have found in southeast Asian island societies. Jane Atkinson (1990) and Anna Tsing (1990) argued that men's quests for magic and spiritual association allow them to be shamans, a very prestigious social role of their respective societies.

The patrilineal family ceremony of *Chesa* often includes the entire village because most villagers are somehow related on this isolated island of Cheju. When all the villagers gather, men will drink and eat, while women prepare food for the extravagant feast. Even in villages where drinking was prohibited by the Divers Association, men are allowed to drink during the days of *Chesa*.

Although men have an important, but narrowly delineated, role in *Chesa* as a figurehead of the family lineage, at home they are not in charge and play a secondary role. Men assume such household responsibilities as taking care of children, cooking, shopping, and feeding livestock (such as pigs). Since these activities are not valued as significant in Cheju society, and the traditional work of the women is highly valued, the men's role in daily life is peripheral and dominated by the main breadwinners—women.

Men cope with their social reality in several ways. Some are able to be satisfied with working hard at home, but many engage in heavy drinking, gambling, frequent trips to the mainland, and are argumentative toward outsiders. This male behavior is a product of cultural and economic contradictions. Since a man's presence is not vital for the maintenance of the household, a dissatisfied husband tends to leave home casually rather than getting a divorce. Men are expected to play the role of husbands to their women and as genealogical fathers to their children, but they are not expected to provide economic support.

Recent Changes in Cheju Economy and Culture

Recent economic development of the island has brought changes to Cheju society. Women's economic contribution to fishery has steadily diminished since a peak in the 1970s (Table 2.4). The dwindling number of henyo is a key indicator of their low production. The total amount of fishery exports still remained relatively high at $36 million in 1990, however, $25 million of that amount came from the export of fresh fish, which replaced a declining production of seaweed. Fresh fish production is mainly achieved by aquaculture (raising fish in enclosed pools of sea water) along the shallow coastal areas. Men are usually involved in such large capital investments.

Table 2.4. Cheju Fishery Products (in Metric Tons)

Year	Total	Fish	Mollusks	Seaweed
1979	38,400	10,500	3,000	25,000
1985	44,190	14,460	6,180	21,800
1990	36,700	19,500	3.600	11,040

Source: *Cheju Province Statistical Yearbook* 1991.

The main reason why divers and their fishing industry have declined since 1970 is the revolutionary change brought to the Cheju economy by citrus farming. Beginning in 1970, commercial farming began to replace subsistence agriculture on Cheju Island. Taking advantage of having the warmest climate in Korea, farmers started to grow tropical fruits, such as tangerines, pineapples, and bananas. In particular, the rate of conversion to tangerine farms was dramatic (Table 2.5). For instance in 1958, only 25 hectares (ha or 62 acres) were planted to tangerine orchards, but by 1990 tangerine farming expanded to 19,414 ha (47,953 acres). Tangerine production increased from 267 metric tons (MT) to 492,700 MT during the same number of years. The rate of growth in the 1970s was especially tremendous. In the 1970s, tangerine trees were considered *college trees*, as such an orchard could easily support the tangerine farmers' children for their college education. Today, especially on the southern part of the island—the leeward side of the harsh winter wind, all the rice fields have been converted to tangerine orchards.

Table 2.5 Tangerine Production

Year	Area under Cultivation in Hectares	Production in Metric Tons
1953	18	6
1958	25	267
1963	111	494
1968	316	3,594
1973	4,688	26,231
1978	11,006	125,950
1990	19,914	492,700

Source: *Cheju Province Statistical Yearbook* 1991.

The commercialization of agriculture provided more jobs for men, and this economic participation has also improved men's social position on the island. Commercialization of farming also means that Cheju's economy is more closely tied to the outside world, and it has become vulnerable to the changes of world market forces. In 1991, when the government permitted importing foreign bananas into Korea, all the banana growers went bankrupt. Today, banana greenhouses stand unattended because domestic bananas are at least three times more expensive than imported ones. Concern is growing among Cheju farmers about importing foreign oranges. If the recent international trade agreement leads to importing greater quantities of California oranges into Korea, then the effects on Cheju tangerine growers could clearly be more devastating than importing bananas has been.

Furthermore, Korean society had become more leisure oriented in recent years, so that Cheju has become a major tourist destination. A combination of its unique culture, subtropical weather and volcanic landforms has attracted tourists from mainland Korea, as well as tourists from other East Asian countries. In 1985, for instance, 1.25 million domestic tourists visited Cheju, and the number more than doubled to 2.76 million in 1990. During the same time, international tourism increased fourfold. Most are Japanese tourists coming to play golf on the slopes of Mt. Halla.

A number of world-class hotels were built in Cheju to cope with the increasing number of visitors, and service jobs associated with tourism have grown quickly. More and more women are choosing, or are compelled, to work in the deluxe, climate-controlled hotels and tourism industry rather than working in the fields or diving into the cold sea (Shin 1988).

Conclusion

The unique image of independent and assertive Cheju women is widely recognized in Korea. Traditionally, Cheju women have been economically dominant, active, and the decision-making member of the family, whereas men have been the homemakers. Women's organizations, such as the Henyo Association, and close cooperation among women have also been emphasized as a basis of higher female status. The diving women of Cheju are not a *muted* group, as are most women in male-dominant societies.

Nevertheless, as the economically dominant member of the household, women in Cheju have not been the symbolic head of the household. Confucian ideology provides a culturally male-dominant value in the legal system and patrilineal ancestor worship ceremonies. Men's roles in the ancestor worship ceremony of *Chesa* are considered more important than both the role of supporting the family and the manual labor of day-to-day life, a finding similar to that of many societies of southeast Asian islands as illustrated in Atkinson and Errington's *Power and Difference* (1990). Yet in daily lives, Cheju men have been frustrated with their contradictory status as symbolic figureheads who are dominated by women in economic and other practical, social decision-making processes.

The traditional economic system promoted the economic dominance of Cheju women divers, however, recent economic development has brought revolutionary change to this quiet island. Subsistence farming and a fishing economy diversified to include commercial citrus farming, aquaculture, and, most importantly, tourism. These changes brought about the rapid decline in women's work as divers as demand for their products declined, and they were compelled to find other jobs. At the same time, the changing economy is destroying the cultural uniqueness and the identity of the island's people.

With the shift in the island's economy came an assertion of male dominance. How has this shift in gender dominance in the economy affected the cultural realm of Cheju society? Economic development of the island has changed the self-sufficiency of Cheju and subjected it to the global economy, thus creating economic dependency. As the economy shifted from a subsistence to a commercial one, Cheju's culture also shifted; e.g., the emergence of mainland Korean culture in Cheju. High school education is expected of girls during the henyo training years, more college education is available at universities on Cheju Island or in mainland Korea, and centrally broadcast television programs now dominate Cheju culture. When the economy was dominated by women, they were the *de facto* leaders of the time, and men were frustrated with only symbolic *de jure* leadership of the household. With the disappearance of traditional culture, and the decline of women divers, the dominant gender role of women is expected to assimilate into the mainstream of Korean culture: a male-dominated society. Cho (1990) found that these changes had taken place in the village she studied, where young women have assumed only domestic duties after higher education. A growing concern among Cheju islanders is to find ways of recapturing and preserving their unique cultural tradition and natural environment (Yoo 1991).

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Learning Activity

Losing Ground: Women's Changing Economic Role on Cheju Island

Siyoung Park

Introduction:
Some places in the world have distinctive characteristics. Cheju, an island south of the Korean peninsula, is one such place. Historically, women have dominated the local economy through their work as deep-sea divers. Today, sea resources are taking a back seat to newer ways of making a living, such as citrus orchards and tourism. As a result, women's and men's traditional roles are changing. This learning activity will help students to begin to understand the elements of change that have affected Cheju.

Grade Level: 10-12

Time Required: 4 class periods

Standards*: The geographically informed person knows and understands
4. the physical and human characteristics of place.
16. changes in the meaning, distribution, and importance of resources.

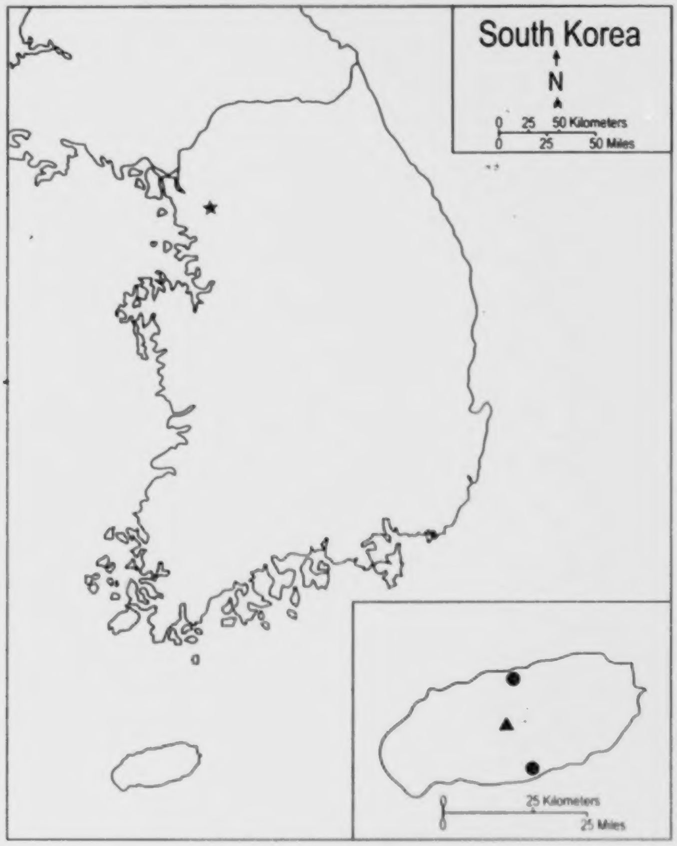
Skills: Students will:
- use maps to ask geographic questions.
- use tables of economic and social data on Cheju to acquire geographic information.
- graph economic and social data on Cheju to organize geographic information
- interpret their graphs and role play in order to analyze geographic information.
- discuss their class activities in order to answer geographic questions.

Geographic Vocabulary: cinder cones, continental shelf, Confucian society, henyo, patrilineal family, aquaculture, filial piety, lava flow, basalt, leeward side

Objectives:
As a result of completing this activity students will
- be able to describe the special physical and cultural characteristics of Cheju island.
- understand that changes in economic activity will also include changes in social relationships (and vice versa).
- be able to integrate knowledge of the environmental, cultural, and economic circumstances of a place to make decisions about resource use.

Materials:
Chapter 2 in this publication, map of Korea and Cheju Island (Figures 2.1 and 2.2), scenarios 1-4, paper and pencil.

**Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* 1994. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS). (Available from NCGE, Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pa. 15705-1087, for $7.00 per copy.)



2.2 Outline Map of South Korea

The Learning Activity:

Background: Read Chapter 2 in this publication on Cheju Women. In this learning activity, students will be confronted with a dilemma. An investor from peninsular South Korea wants to build a new resort on Cheju island. Because of environmental considerations, as well as the needs and values of some local residents, he is facing resistance to the project. The students will role play the different circumstances based on their understanding of Cheju island, its traditional culture and economy, the recent development of citrus and tourism, and its effects on the lives of individual local people. Then students will create a development plan for Cheju that takes into account at least some of the needs of all those concerned.

Introducing the Activity:

Emphasize the ideas contained in the standards listed; that different parts of the world have special physical and cultural characteristics, even though they may be connected to many other parts of the world through their economy or political situation. Also explain that changes placed on the value of various resources or the ways in which people use these resources will affect social relations and vice versa.

Executing the Activity:

1. The teacher will introduce students to the location and basic physical and cultural characteristics of Cheju island. Pass around or display a map of Korea and Cheju island. You can also pass out the list of vocabulary terms and review them if necessary (15 minutes—or more if you review the vocabulary).

2. Students will be given the paper on Cheju Women as a reading assignment, which can be completed as homework (if necessary).

3. In the second class period, briefly discuss the ideas in the reading assignment and then have students create, analyze, and discuss tables 1-5 from the paper.

4. Divide students into pairs. Ask each pair of students to prepare a graph for each of the tables in the paper. Prepare the first graph on the sex ratio on the chalk board using the gender profile of the students as a model (see lesson about sex ratios in China in this volume). Place years on the x axis and the number of 75 males per 100 females on the y axis. The x axis will have the specific years marked. The y axis can be marked in increments of 5, beginning with the number 1. Then draw in narrow columns for the data.

5. Now have students prepare a graph of population change from Table 2.1; women divers by age from Table 2.2; percent of divers to total fishery workers (last column) from Table 2.3; area of cultivation of tangerines (in hectares or acres) from Table 2.5.

6. When students have completed their graphs, have pairs of students recombine into groups of four students. Ask each group to determine and write down at least one interpretation of each graph. Give students 5-10 minutes to do this.

7. Then discuss the information revealed by the graphs:

- Note that the number of females to males is declining in Cheju.
- Note that the percentage of young divers in Table 2.2 was much higher in 1969 than 1983.
- In Table 2.3, note how Cheju's total population increased (by in-migration to Cheju Island from the mainland), and compare it with the rapid decline of fishery workers. Notice that the ratio of divers to total fishery workers (B/A) still remained relatively high while the total number of fishery workers dropped. This shows that women divers (henyo) have always been the major fishery workers of Cheju.
- Note the tremendous increase in tangerine production since the 1970s.

8. In the third class period, divide the class into four groups. Assign each group a scenario to read and then discuss it among themselves. Address any associated questions. You can observe (and assist if necessary) their discussion by moving from group to group. (10-15 minutes)

9. Then divide the class into as many groups as necessary so that each group has four people; one from each of the first four groups. These new groups are assigned the task of devising a future economic plan for Cheju island that takes into account the preservation of traditional culture, conservation of the natural environment, the needs of local residents, and the plans of developers such as Mr. Lee. At the end of the class period (or to be completed as a group project for the next day as homework) each group should submit its proposal to the teacher.

Concluding the Activity:
During the fourth class period have groups compare and contrast their development plans for Cheju in an open forum. You might photocopy a model plan or two for the whole class or post them in some fashion so that everyone can read other plans. Discuss some of the solutions the students created. Ask students if they know of any development or conservation issues in their local area, and then compare and contrast them with the situation in Cheju.

Source:
Chapter 2: "Women and Development in Cheju-Do," by Siyoung Park, in this publication.

Extension:
Investigate a local situation where the value of resources, or the types of resources traditionally used, changed. This could have occurred in the students' grandparent's time or the present. Have students interview local people to learn how changes in the economy affected their lives, particularly those of the women.

Scenario #1:

Soon-Hie's Choice: Should she become a diver to keep the 1500-year old tradition of the island, or take a job at the hotels?

Soon-Hie Kim is a 15 year-old girl who lives in Sogwipo City on Cheju Island. She has just finished junior high school and is wondering what she should do with her future. Traditionally, by the age of 16, most girls become a full-time divers. Both her mother and her grandmother have been divers all their lives. Soon-Hie has already learned how to dive from her mother and grandmother, and she also learned how to catch abalones and other shellfish. Her grandmother still enjoys diving occasionally and gathers seaweed in the shallow sea.

Sogwipo is on the southern and leeward side of Cheju Island. Cold, Siberian winds cannot reach here in winter, so the tangerine trees never freeze. Her father used to farm a small rice plot, however, he converted it to a tangerine orchard in recent years. When his trees start producing tangerines, and hoping that the price of tangerines remain high, he plans to send Soon-Hie's younger brother to college.

During the last ten years numerous tourist hotels have been built in the Sogwipo area. A number of Soon-Hie's friends decided not to become divers like their mothers, but have found jobs working in the hotels—as cleaners, receptionists, or waitresses. Soon-Hie would like to work in the Hyatt Regency Hotel near her home as it provides the best view of the ocean and the white sand beach.

Grandma encourages Soon-Hie to become a diver, but the mother says, "Girls no longer have to dive in the cold sea everyday. When it was the only thing to do in the old days we had to do it. Today girls can go to colleges in Cheju City, or find many other jobs in the hotels and tourist centers." Soon-Hie loves to dive as much as 50 feet (15.24 meters) down to catch abalones, in keeping with the tradition of her mother and grandmother, yet the air-conditioned hotels seem better than the cold ocean.

The tradition of henyo is almost in danger of disappearing as young girls move into the tourist economy. With the weakening economic power of the Henyo Association, the economic dominance of Cheju women is also disappearing.

- What should Soon-Hie choose?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each job?
- Why do you think she is not thinking about going to college?

Scenario #2:

Economic and Developmental Concerns

Mr. Lee, a business person from Seoul, wants to build a hotel and a golf course on his land on the hillside of Mt. Halla, which he purchased a few years ago when land prices were still low. Cheju Island, like many other resort islands, has serious concerns about economic dependency on outsiders and tourists. Gradually their economies have become tied to absentee land ownership and outside developers. Mr. Lee believes he can attract many tourists from Seoul, as well as from Japan and Taiwan, who enjoy Cheju for the weekend golf trips. He is facing problems with local officials about drawing too much ground water, and some residents oppose his development plan. Some local residents believe that they should keep out the mainlanders (and tourist from other countries) because development has raised the price of the land so high that they can no longer afford to own farmland or afford homes.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of tourist development such as Mr. Lee's project?
- If you were a resident of the island would you prevent the development of resorts?
- If you were Mr. Lee would you still build the resort even if the residents did not want you to do so?

Scenario #3:

Environmental Concerns:

Cheju Island's basic geology derives from porous volcanic lava flows, therefore water is found only along the coastal areas in springs. Cheju spring water was so good that it was marketed throughout Korea as bottled mineral water, however, overdrawing the water became the most serious environmental concern of the island. New environmental laws, and the Special Development Law of Cheju was enacted in December 1991. Solid waste and wastewater treatment are also growing concerns in Cheju. Now, any new large development project requires the submission of an environmental impact statement on the effect of development on the environment, and how it will carefully monitor water usage.

- If more people continue to visit Cheju every year as tourists, how might increasing tourism affect the local environment?
- If more of Cheju's farmers want to plant orchards and other cash crops, how might these uses affect the local environment?
- Will passing laws be sufficient to protect Cheju's environment?
- Can you think of similar situations in the U.S. or other nations?

Scenario #4:

Cultural Concerns

Cheju Island, unlike the rest of mainland Korea, has had a unique culture and dialect for more than 1500 years. The new resorts that attract so many tourists also bring influences and ideas from other cultures to Cheju, such as: mainland Korean culture, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Western cultures. Concern is growing among the local residents to preserve what is left of the disappearing traditional culture including the henyo tradition in particular, but also language, religion, and social relationships.

- What is your position on the preservation of Cheju's traditional culture?
- Would you take a pro-development position or try to stop foreign visitors or investment on the island to preserve the traditional way of life?
- What are other ways to preserve traditional culture? Give at least three reasons why you would take the position that you do.

3

Development and Factory Women: Negative Perceptions from a Malaysian Source Area[*]

Amriah Buang

Manufacturing is indispensable to Malaysia's economic development, not only because of the foreign exchange it earns, but also because of its capacity to generate new employment opportunities. The share of manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment in Malaysia has risen from 8.7 percent in 1970 to 15.1 percent in 1985. A notable characteristic of this has been the massive increase in the participation of women, particularly young, single women from rural areas. This is a phenomenal development in Malaysia since rural women, especially Muslim Malay women, have not previously left their villages, on such a large scale. In 1957, Malay women comprised only 6.6 percent of the manufacturing sector's labor force while Malay men made up 66.6 percent; by 1976 women's share stood at 18.8 percent and men's participation had dropped to 47.9 percent. By 1979, the number of Malay women in the female labor force exceeded that of Chinese women who had previously been predominant (Jamilah 1984: 78-9).

The majority of Malay women factory workers are rural-urban migrants or originate from a rural background. Most of them belong to large families with low incomes. They migrate to reduce economic dependency on their families and with the hope of being able to remit money home. With prospects of better monetary incomes and material well-being, many women have gone to work in the alien occupational and social environment of multinational companies, creating a structural change in the employment pattern of Malaysia (Ackerman 1980). This change was encouraged by the implementation of the ethnic quota imposed by the New Economic Policy (NEP) after 1970.

Negative Perceptions and Malay Factory Women

Negative perceptions regarding the *socio-moral* consequences of the employment of Malay women in factories is not a new issue. In 1978, newspapers reported illegitimate pregnancies among factory women, incidents of abandoned newborn babies in industrial communities and the involvement of female factory workers in social activities which conflicted with traditional Muslim Malay cultural norms and values (*Utusan Malaysia* 10 and 29 October, 1978). Since then, the negative effect of factory employment on Muslim Malay women has been a cause of concern and debate in Malay society.

In 1979, Jamilah conducted a survey in rural communities of attitudes to various aspects of the migration of Malay women to factory employment (Figure 3.1). In this survey, parents with daughters currently employed as factory workers in the cities were interviewed about the circumstances leading to their daughters' employment and their knowledge and opinion of the social position and reputation of factory women in society. Married couples with daughters working in the factory while retaining village residence were also interviewed. Again, they were questioned as to their opinions of female outmigration to the factories and the reputation of factory girls.

Jamilah's (1984: 240) results tabulated from 2,000 village respondents, representing 60 villages throughout Peninsular Malaysia, may be summarized as follows: ...many parents of factory girls were worried about the morality of their daughters. They were also beginning to feel ashamed that these girls were employed in an occupation which was rapidly acquiring a low moral and social status in Malaysian society.

Malays who were concerned about the moral failings of women factory workers were not restricted to parents, but included prominent women politicians who urged rural parents not to allow their daughters to migrate to urban-based factories, for fear that they might be corrupted by the permissive culture of multinational firms.

Members of Malaysian urban communities have similar negative perceptions. Jamilah (1984: 253-254) concluded the findings of her urban community survey in 1979 and 1981 and her longitudinal study of the period 1977-83 as follows:

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[*] Originally published as Chapter 15, pp. 197-210 in *Different Places, Different Voices*, eds. Janet Henshall Momsen and Vivian Kinnaird. London and New York: Routledge 1993. Used with permission.

> The findings...confirm that generally migrant Malay factory girls are regarded as of doubtful morality. They have low moral status in the urban-industrial community. The...urban residents indicated clearly that factory girls, living on their own, lead undesirable lifestyles; they are not willing to let their children mix with these girls...they believe many factory girls are women who can 'easily be led astray by bad element.' They would think twice in selecting factory girls as potential wives and even if they decided to accept a 'decent' factory girl as a bride, they would insist that she stops working in the factories after marriage. They do not wish their wives to be associated with an occupation which has a low social and moral status in Malaysian society. Generally, the older residents in the urban-industrial communities have a more hostile and suspicious attitude toward the migrant factory girls.

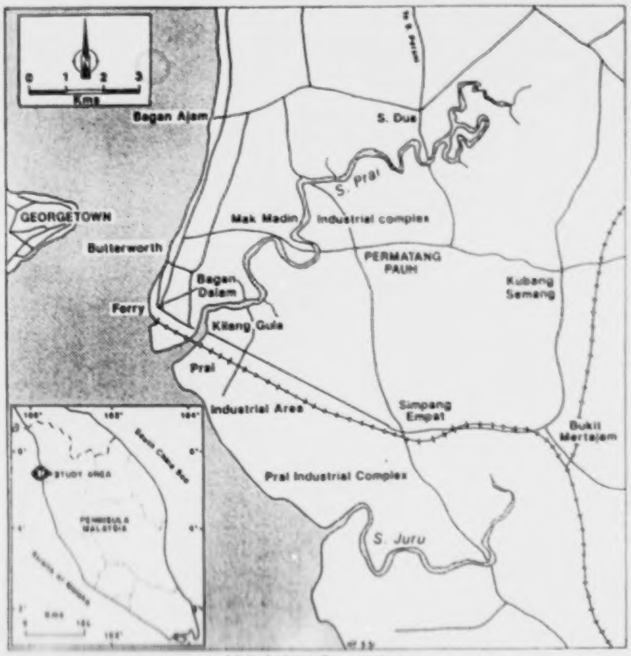
VIETNAM
THAILAND
South China Sea
Pulau Pinang
Kuala Lumpur
SINGAPORE
INDONESIA (Sumatra)
BRUNEI
Sabah
Sarawak
INDOSESIA (Kalimantan)
Malaysia
N
100 200 Kilometers
100 200 Miles

3.1 Malaysia

Negative Perceptions from Permatang Pauh

For the purpose of examining the perceptions of a local community regarding the employment of women in factories, a study was conducted in Permatang Pauh in November 1982. Permatang Pauh is an area lying adjacent to the industrial zones of Seberang Prai, the peninsular part of the state of Penang in the northwestern district of Peninsular Malaysia. Permatang Pauh (Figure 3.2) consists of 50 villages connected by a road network to three major industrial zones in the Penang-Seberang Prai state: the Mak Mandin, the Bagan Serai, and the Prai. The distance between the villages and these industrial complexes varies from 6.4 to 24.1 kilometers (4 to 15 miles).

The study included interviews with 1,468 adults (mainly heads of families) from 45 villages. All the respondents were dependent on rice farming as their main source of livelihood, although at the time of the survey a large number of interviewees had ceased farming their rice fields due to repeated seasons of bad harvests. Of the total number of respondents, only 258 (17.6 percent), admitted to having at least one female family member working in a factory on a permanent basis. More than three-quarters of the total sample declared that none of their female family members were involved, while a small percentage (5.5 percent) declined to answer. Of these families with female members involved in factory employment, the majority (174 households) had only one female household member in factory employment.


0 1 2 3
Kms
Bagan Ajam
S. Dua
S. Prai
GEORGETOWN
Butterworth
Mak Madin
Industrial complex
PERMATANG PAUH
Kubang Semang
Bagan Dalam
Ferry
Kilang Gula
Prai
Industrial Area
Simpang Empat
Bukit Mertajam
Prai Industrial Complex
S. Juru
STUDY AREA
PENINSULAR MALAYSIA
South China Sea
Straits of Malacca

3.2 Study Area in Permatang Pauh

The low degree of involvement of the respondents' own family members in factory employment indicates that they espoused a dual position with respect to their perception of women factory workers in the nearby industrial areas. First, as an involved party evaluating the changes resulting from the employment of their relatives in the factories, and second as a detached observer, evaluating the changes resulting from the employment of their neighbors and of migrant female workers who sought accommodations in the villages fringing the industrial area.

Interviews with household heads indicate that the source communities were unhappy with what were perceived as deteriorating moral standards among factory women. These pertained to the women's manner of dressing which was judged "indecent", their social mixing, which was rated "very liberal" and "permissive" and their decreasing interest in local affairs. Together these factors account for 40.7 percent of the total responses (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Perception of personal changes that occurred when women became factory employees

Perception	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Type of change		
Liberal socializing	322	21.9
Indecent dressing	143	9.7
Decrease in moral standards	126	8.6
Improved standard of living	100	6.8
Increased knowledge	66	4.5
No noticeable changes	55	3.8
Self-supporting	9	0.6
Less interest in local affairs	5	0.3
Devaluation of domestic role	4	0.2
'Difficult to say'	512	35.0
No comment	126	8.6
Total	1,468	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork 1982

In contrast, positive responses such as improvement in household living standards, increased knowledge among the factory women as a result of greater social exposure and a higher level of self-sufficiency, were less common answers. Such comments constitute 11.9 percent of total responses indicating a weak support for female social and economic independence. Negative perceptions were voiced three and a half times more often than positive comments.

The proportion of negative perceptions may be higher than the statistics indicate if we take into consideration the 512 respondents (35 percent) who were classified in the "difficult to say" category (Table 3.1). This group stated their reluctance to incur the anger of factory women and their families as the reason for their difficulty in describing the changes in specific negative terms. The source community were also of the opinion that there were alternative, more suitable occupations for women, such as school teaching, clerical work, nursing, handicrafts, farming and managing a business (Table 3.2). For 42.3 percent of the respondents who were uncertain whether there were suitable alternative occupations for women, home-making was their preference. Reasons for a preference among alternative non-factory jobs (Table 3.3) centered around economic remuneration (49.7 percent). Social, personal security and morality reasons constituted another 49.1 percent of total responses. Since these broad groupings are approximately equal we can assume that judgment does not appear to be wholly influenced by a particular stereotype.

Table 3.2 Occupations considered suitable for women

	Responses	
Occupation	Number	Percent
Government jobs (school teachers, clerks, nurses)	294	20.0
Self-employment (handicrafts)	163	11.1
Agriculture (other than rubber tapping)	136	9.3
Business	91	6.2
Home maker	41	2.8
Rubber tapping	10	0.7
Housemaids	6	0.4
Uncertain	727	49.5
Total	1,468	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork 1982

Table 3.3 Perception of the suitability of alternative occupations

	Responses	
Perception	Number	Percent
Pension benefits	191	25.8
Higher income	177	23.9
Greater safety	102	13.8
Less morally detrimental	96	13.0
More fitting with home role	91	12.3
Better working conditions	75	10.1
Match with school qualification	3	0.4
'Uncertain'	6	1.0
Total[a]	741	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork 1982.

[a] Some totals are rounded

The proportion of responses which supported the idea of encouraging Malay Muslim women in general to embark on a life-long career in the factory sector is numerically larger than the converse (37.3 percent compared to 28.9 percent: Table 3.4). When the same question was posed about the respondents' own female family members, the percentage of positive responses fell to 10.9 percent (Table 3.5), a difference of 70.8 percent. The question therefore arises: Why is it that 71 percent who supported the idea of long-term employment of women in the factory sector change their opinion when the women workers in question are members of their family? This situation allows us to summarize the sample case study as follows: (1) the source community supports, in general, the employment of women in factories; (2) nevertheless, it does not favor factory employment on a long-term basis; (3) factory employment, on a permanent basis is definitely out of the question if it directly involves a member of the respondents' own family. Thus, it seems clear that the phenomenon of female factory employment is something that is tolerated rather than welcomed in the source area. The interplay of the undesirable "side effects" of factory employment and the immediate economic benefits from it are responsible for producing this rather ambivalent attitude.

Table 3.4 Perception of whether Muslim Malay girls should be encouraged to work in factories

	Respondents	
Perception	Number	Percent
Should be encouraged	548	37.3
'Difficult to say'	433	29.5
Should not be encouraged	424	28.9
Depends on circumstances	37	2.5
No comment	26	1.8
Total	1,468	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork 1982

Table 3.5 Perception of whether respondents' female family members should be encouraged to work in factories

	Respondents	
Perception	Number	Percent
Depends on circumstances	268	18.3
'Difficult to say'	211	14.4
Should be encouraged	160	10.9
Should not be encouraged	133	9.0
No comment	696	47.4
Total	1,468	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork 1982

A comparison of the data in Table 3.3 with that in Table 3.1 suggests that while short-term consideration prompted the support of the source community for factory employment of women, long-term perceptions prompted the opposite. The short-term considerations were mainly economic while those of the long term were the combination of economic (remuneration and better working conditions) and socio-moral factors, with the latter approximating the former (Table 3.3). Thus, even though social and moral considerations did bear rather heavily in the long run (Table 3.1), immediate economic pressures forced the toleration of factory work as a temporary solution.

The case study allows us to make a number of points regarding the perception of factory employment for women among the people of Permatang Pauh. The community is aware of the economic benefits of factory employment: the community is also aware of negative aspects, namely the deterioration of moral conduct and social responsibilities. Nevertheless, the community concedes the short-term benefit of factory work as a practical solution to the households' immediate economic needs. In the long term, however, respondents do not see the work as a solution to economic needs, especially in light of the moral questions that emerged. Finally, the community would reject both short-and long-term factory employment if there were alternative solutions to its immediate economic problems.

Justification for Negative Perceptions?

Several researchers have expressed resentment and doubts over the negative perception of factory women by various segments of society (Jamilah 1984; Fatimah 1985). They attempt to identify factors that underlie the "unjust" attitude of Malaysian society towards factory women. Jamilah deplores the press publicity received by illegitimate pregnancies and the moral conduct of factory women. It is based, she claims, on hearsay and gossip and on reports from a minority of factory women and members of the urban-industrial communities, rather than on established facts. Jamilah believed that there is inherent suspicion among conservative elements in Malay society regarding single women residing outside the supervision of their elders.

Jamilah rationalized the political, economic and racial reasons that underpin the urban community's resentment of the presence of factory women, thereby making factory women "societal scapegoats." The establishment of free-trade zones in Penang's Bayan Lepas was at the expense of several vegetable farmers who lost their land, and of squatters and residents who were forced to evacuate their homes. As a result, the immigration of the women workers was identifiable with the developers' interests and was thus viewed with resentment by local residents. In addition, the influx of immigrants prompted a sudden rise in the prices of foodstuffs and rental accommodations. Irate residents began to express their anger at these changes in the form of hostility and unfriendliness towards the migrants. Similarly, the local Chinese residents of Sungai Way Free Trade Zone in Selangor suspected that there was ethnic bias in the government's decision to develop the area into a free-trade zone, establishing factories which were allowed to recruit Malay workers in order to conform with the New Economic Policy. The suspicion that this was an indirect method of weakening the Chinese hold in the area made them less hospitable to the Malay factory migrants. Nevertheless, regardless of whether the local residents were Malays or non-Malays, they were not accustomed to having young, single women workers as their neighbors. The women were regarded as a threat to the established social order (Jamilah 1984).

Fatimah (1985) reasons that the moral stigmatization of factory women is related to male chauvinism. Women in Malaysia are regarded as dependent on and inferior to men. The man is always the head of the household, the breadwinner, and the protector. The factory women had reversed these roles by contributing to family income and gaining independence. Therefore, some male members of society viewed the participation of women in industry as emasculation and expressed their "anger" towards females engaged in "men's jobs" by accusing them of immoral behavior. Fatimah suggests that similar immoral behavior among clerks, typists, and other occupational groups is ignored because in these instances, the workers are employed in "women's work." She feels that some men cannot accept the attitudes of employers who willingly employ more women than men in the manufacturing sector. Thus women (and their male employers) constitute a threat to male egos and men retaliate with vitriol and contempt (Fatimah 1985).

Apart from men's prejudices, Fatimah also indicates that the stigmatization of the women factory workers coincides with the image of the urban industrial area. Many of the factory women moved from rural to squatter settlement areas. The latter are regarded as crime-ridden and unhealthy (Kraal 1979; Zainah 1978).

Both Jamilah's and Fatimah's arguments seem to indicate that the low moral status accorded by Malay factory women is not justified. The question which needs to be addressed, especially in light of the surveyed community's negative perceptions, is whether there is really any justification for society's attitude. This is addressed by empirically examining the reality of factory women's working lives and by evaluating these findings in terms of the normative value system upheld and subscribed to by both the factory women and general Malay society.

Women and Factory Work

Jamilah (1984; Grossman 1979; Khoo and Khoo 1978; Lim 1978) reported observations of the American multinational socio-cultural system and its impact on Malaysian culture. American companies have a Western-based socio-cultural system. Many companies organized beauty contests where female workers vied for awards and prizes which clearly encouraged them to become "sex symbols" and adopt liberal social mores. For example, production operators who won beauty contests were usually promoted to the role of the company's receptionist or social escort for company guests and overseas visitors. The prizes offered in the contests included free courses in grooming, overseas trips, and often overnight hotel reservations for two. The women workers were encouraged to invite their boyfriends to annual beauty contests and balls. At these functions, alcoholic drinks were freely available. Female workers were also encouraged to join outdoor sports and athletic activities where men and women participated jointly.

As employees, the Malay workers had to adapt to these cultural demands in full knowledge that they were transgressing Islamic injunctions. It should be pointed out that although not all multinational companies forced their workers to participate in such activities, most workers were urged to do so. Inevitably, workers had to adapt if they wanted favorable recognition from superiors. In addition, many factory women, being young and single, were eager to experiment with new ideas and thus were easily influenced by what they perceived as the normal practices of modern (Western) people and the modern (Western) way of life. Indeed, many migrant girls perceived as the normal practices of modern urban life as revolving around dating, dancing and alcohol (Jamilah 1984). Given the imposed Westernized cultural atmosphere and the competitiveness among the female workers, it was very common to observe attempts by the women workers to dress according to the latest fashion and behave like Americans. Several wore "Farah Fawcett hairstyles, tight blue jeans and thick facial make-up. When the mini-skirt was in vogue, they were hitching up their work uniforms to a mini-skirt level (Jamilah 1984: 239)."

The tendency for several Malay women workers to reside without the supervision of parents and relatives encourages visits from men. Free from the strict supervision of their families, some of the women entertained men at their homes. In some cases, parties were organized at which modern, Western-type dancing took place. In the period 1977-8, a number of women were caught with their boyfriends in public places and charged in the Islamic law courts with indecent, promiscuous behavior ranging from *khalwat* (close intimate proximity between unmarried couples) to *zinah* (illicit sex). Some factory women were daring enough to cohabit with men. In some cases, this and other relations with men resulted in unwanted pregnancies and illegitimate children (Jamilah 1984).

Conducting research in a Japanese-owned company, Fatimah reports similar findings. In addition to the big annual carnival show consisting of drama, songs, dances and beauty contests, there were smaller parties held regularly throughout the year. These came complete with rock bands, and the participants had ample opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the latest dances at such times. Attendance at the parties necessitated some knowledge of dancing or at least a willingness to learn (Fatimah 1985). There was a conscious development of a middle-class feminine ideal. The young women were encouraged to see themselves as 'sex-objects' through the promotion of beauty or "sweetheart" contests, fashion shows and beauty culture classes. Related to this was the development of a consumer culture aimed at the same feminine ideal. For example, every week make-up representatives from Yardley and Max Factor visited the firm. Workers became the victims of hire-purchase "con-men" who could be seen at their door each payday collecting the 5- or 10-ringgits installment for dresses and cosmetics purchased on credit (Fatimah 1985).

Research conducted by Jamilah and Fatimah is not hearsay, gossip or conjecture, but provides facts about the practices, norms and values built into the Malay factory women's working lives which clearly contradict their religious injunctions. The normative value system upheld and subscribed to by Malay Muslim society in general depicts the Quranic view of the chastity of women (Yusuf 1983):

> Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that will make for greater purity for them...And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husband, their fathers, their husband's father, their sons, their brothers, and their brother's sonsor their sister's sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess or male servants free from physical needs, or small children who have no sense of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. O ye believers! Turn you all together towards God, that you may attain bliss (24: 30-1).
>
> For men and women who guard their chastity...for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward (33: 35).
>
> Women impure are for men impure, and men impure are for women impure, and women of purity are for men of purity; and men of purity are for women of purity; these are not affected by what people say; for them there is no forgiveness and provision honorable (24: 26).
>
> The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication flog each of them with hundred stripes: Let not compassion move you in their case in the matter prescribed by God if you believe in God and the Last Day (24: 2).
>
> The believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil (9: 71).

These Quranic verses clearly prescribe that Muslim women must dress decently, safeguard their personal modesty, avoid permissive and promiscuous socializing and must not be treated by themselves or others as sex symbols. Muslim Malay society accepts these Islamic dictums and subscribes to them.

In light of Muslim Malay society's beliefs, the Permatang Pauh source community's perceptions were reasonable in their moral expectation of the Malay women factory workers. It is not the fact that the women went out to work in modern factories that people resent, rather it is what they perceive to be an outright transgression of what they have cherished as good and decent that they are unwilling to tolerate. On principle they cannot accept any form of religious transgression committed by any occupational group of Muslim women. They will not, for instance, approve of similar acts of transgression by Muslim female teachers, clerks or nurses. However, the cases of factory women's misconduct appear to have received wider publicity, evoking public reaction, due primarily to the number of women working in factories and the socio-moral systems of foreign-owned factories.

The proportion of Malay women factory workers rose from 19.1 percent in 1975 to 26.2 percent in 1979 (Labor Force Survey Report 1979). Furthermore, the nature of factory production results in a spatial concentration of the workforce. These factors make the presence of women workers highly visible and conspicuous and so the impact is readily felt in specific neighborhoods as well as society at large. The problem is compounded by the fact that the foreign-owned multinational companies that employ the bulk of Muslim Malay women, do indeed articulate values and rituals that conflict directly with Islamic ideals. The teaching profession in Malaysia does not preach indecency, nor make it a point to groom beauty queens and "sex-symbols" or to hold parties. The Malay clerks and typists, the majority of whom are found in government offices, are subjected to the public service ethical codes in which decency in dressing and social manners are strictly required.

Society's attitude to the Malay factory women has led several multinational companies to amend their recreational activities in order to avoid public controversy. Beauty pageants, annual balls, Western-type dancing and the consumption of alcohol are now a rarity and male and female sporting activities have become segregated. However, very little progress has been achieved with respect to the moral de-stigmatization of Malay factory women. The Muslim Malay society is not convinced that this new morality of the multinational companies is a genuine matter of faith and conviction and not merely artificial devices to pacify the women's parents while attracting their daughters to work in the factories. Hence, the continued suspicion and skepticism of Malay society about the impact of factory employment on Muslim women.

In this regard, it is interesting to note the interpretive ability of society. The source community may not understand broad structural factors, both international and local, underlying the phenomenon of factory women that Jamilah sought to explicate. They may not know that the interplay of forces encouraging the establishment of export-oriented industrialization with the implementation of the New Economic Order has resulted in a sudden expansion of employment opportunities for Malay female workers. Although the community could sense that worthwhile job opportunities were becoming scarce in the rural area, they knew very little of the exploitation of the industrial proletariat by their capitalist multinational employers that Fatimah (1985) was eager to highlight, nor of the capitalist tendencies to "intensify," "decompose," and "recompose" women's subordination at the industrial workplace that Elson and Pearson (1981) conceptualized. However, the community definitely knew something of the "feminine" false consciousness that was being reinforced by factory employment. They knew that the factories encapsulated their female workers into alien social activities and subcultures.

Judging from the answers given by respondents in Permatang Pauh to questions regarding the reasons for their low opinion of the factory working environment, it is clear that the source community was aware of the moral dangers and risks facing the Muslim factory women. They (70.3 percent) perceived that young women were handicapped in coping with the urban-industrial alien and threatening way of life. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents believed that the women did not know how to handle interactions with men and might easily fall prey to prostitution racketeers and ill-intentioned men. At an impressionable age, and in an eagerness to experiment with what they were taught to think of as the normal way of modern and urban life, 74.5 percent of the respondents felt that the women could easily be influenced by bad elements in the urban-industrial community. All the respondents believe in the sanctity of marriage and want their daughters or female relatives eventually to marry. However, 92 percent of them did not want a situation where the women compromise their moral integrity and transgress their religious injunctions in their search for a husband. In this vein, 79 percent of the respondents strongly opposed the idea that unwanted pregnancies could be avoided by teaching the factory women about contraception. To them, *zinah* (illicit sex) is still zinah whether it results in pregnancy or not.

The source community also had definite ideas as to who should be held responsible for the moral corruption and stigmatization of the Malay factory women. The majority of them (79 percent) blamed the multinational value system and socialization structure, although 65.5 percent did not relieve the women of personal responsibility. Every Muslim must make efforts to protect themselves from transgressing the religious injunctions, especially when related to grave sins such as zinah and moral decadence. Perhaps such a stance underlies the observation made by Jamilah (1984) and Fatimah (1985) that many factory girls have become reluctant to participate in activities organized by the factory management.

Prospects and Conclusions

The moral stigmatization of Malay female factory workers is likely to continue as long as Malay Muslim society is not convinced that the factories are a mainspring of that which is Islamically decent and good. To achieve this the foreign-owned companies must be willing to perform more than just cosmetic adjustments to the socio-cultural activities and values that they institute. For instance, instead of abolishing beauty queen contests, annual balls and parties, they could improve their image by sponsoring religious classes, talks and courses, appropriate educational programs and other activities geared to make Muslim women aware of their multifaceted role in society. Similarly, instead of merely ceasing to persuade and urge Muslim women workers to participate in Western-type cultural and social activities, the companies would be more convincing to the local Muslim society if they embarked on policies and activities that would not only reflect their respect for the host society's Islamic values but also their seriousness in safeguarding and promoting them. These may range from designing Islamically decent uniforms and providing prayer rooms in the factories, to offering facilities for the organization of funds for welfare purposes which are in line with Islamic principles.

The prospect of adoption of such suggestions is not very great. This is not because organizing beauty contests, annual balls and other activities is less expensive, but because the companies have the choice of not needing to do so. Relocating their factories in other countries which provide equally cheap female labor but which are less culturally and religiously demanding may be advantageous. Alternatively, they may be allowed to ignore the expectations of Malaysia's Muslim society as the nation is in urgent need of strengthening its economy through industrialization.

Thus, as long as the presence of the multinational companies is wanted in Malaysia, as long as Malay Muslims uphold their religious teachings, there will be no complete happiness for the Malay women factory workers. Those who resist the encroachment of the alien culture in the factories will continue to face problems in their working relationship with their peers and management, and those who embrace the new culture will continue to suffer from the moral stigmatization of their society.

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Learning Activity

Balancing between Two Worlds: Stereotyping Factory Women in Malaysia

Carolyn V. Prorok

Introduction:
In all cultures and communities we form stereotypes about each other based upon attributional characteristics, such as race, religion, social class, age, and job type. Even when people have historically shared the same culture and resources, these stereotypes have played a powerful role in shaping social relationships. In this lesson, we will explore gendered stereotypes as they relate to the types of jobs men and women are expected to do in the Malay Muslim culture of Malaysia compared with the United States. One consequence of social expectations based upon stereotypes is the perceptions people have about particular places or regions.

Grade Level: 10-12

Time Required: 3-4 class periods

Standards *:
The geographically informed person knows and understands:
6. how culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.
9. the characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on the Earth's surface.
11. patterns and networks of economic interdependence on the Earth's surface.

Skills: In this learning activity students will practice:
- asking questions and acquiring data about women's work
- organizing information
- analyzing information about stereotyping, the global economy, and changing perceptions of place

Geographic Vocabulary and Concepts: gender, stereotype, kampong, Free Trade Zone (FTZ), multinational corporation, Muslim, Pulau Pinang (known as Penang to the British)

Objectives: As a result of completing this learning activity, students will:
- understand the concepts of gender and stereotyping
- conduct a survey of their own community on gendered stereotyping of job types
- understand the circumstances that connect young Malay women to their own communities through the computers we use
- create tables and graphs depicting the results of their survey
- evaluate similarities and differences in people's attitudes towards women's work in both Malaysia and their local community

Materials: Chapter 3 in this publication: "Development and Factory Women: Negative Perceptions from a Malaysian Source Area," maps of Malaysia [Figures 3.1, 3.2, in Chapter 3, and 3.3 (outline map)], pen and paper, survey form, Selina's story

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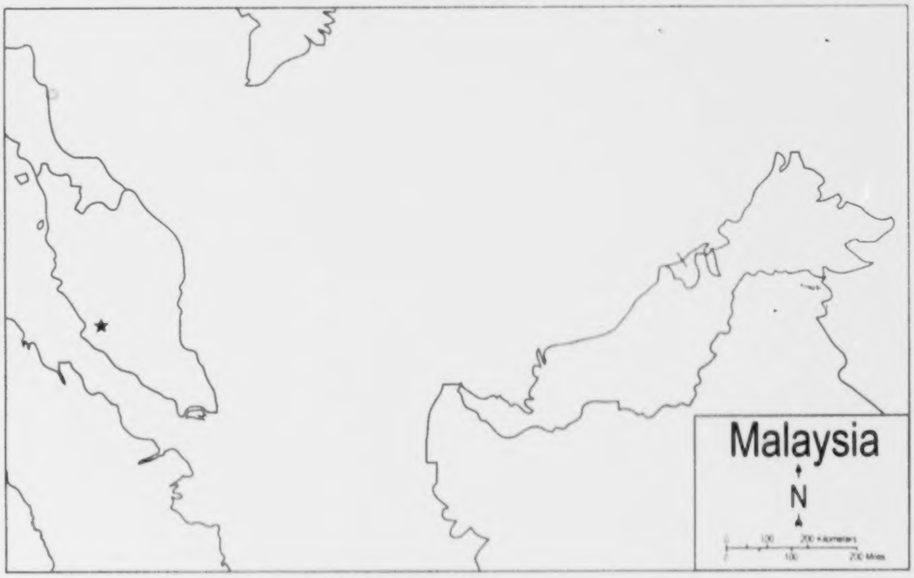
**Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* 1994. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS). (Available from NCGE, Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1087, for $7.00 per copy.)



3.3 Outline Map of Malaysia

The Learning Activity:

Background: In their search for a nimble, submissive, and cheap labor force, multinational corporations have also taken advantage of Free Trade Zones (FTZ) created by developing countries that seek to bring significant amounts of capital investment to their countries. Malaysia is one such country. Over the past ten years, Malaysia has emerged as one of the leading exporters of computer chips because of the above-mentioned circumstances. This learning activity will inform students of this type of economic development, how and why women are preferred as factory workers, and how stereotypes about women who work for the multinationals affect their lives and people's perceptions of the Free Trade Zone itself.

Introducing the Activity: Ask students to take out a blank piece of paper and pencil. Have them create four columns on the page with the following titles: a man's job, a woman's job, a job characteristic, a place characteristic. Then write a list of the following jobs and their locations on the chalk board (feel free to add or subtract a listing).

professional dancer in Las Vegas
steel worker in Pittsburgh
stockbroker in New York
actor in Los Angeles
construction worker in Houston
hairdresser in San Francisco
professor in Boston
in-home child caregiver in Miami

Ask students first to place an "X" on their papers as to whether they think that the job is a man's job or a woman's job. Then have them write down the first descriptive word that comes to their mind that would represent the character of the person doing the job and the character of the place where that job type is closely associated. Discuss the results of this exercise with a focus on the concepts of gender and stereotyping. That is, during the discussion introduce the two terms and assist students in understanding their responses in terms of these concepts. In the United States some job-related stereotypes may be breaking down, and the economies of certain places may be changing. If your students' answers reflect this trend, then discuss why that is happening. If their responses do not reflect those trends, then discuss that as well. Then explain that the following activities will show how gendered stereotypes are formed in the first place through the experience of both Americans and Malay Muslims in Malaysia.

Executing the Activity:

1. Using the maps provided with this volume, assist students in identifying the location of Malaysia and the state of Pulau Pinang within Malaysia. You can use a transparency to expedite this activity. Briefly explain to students that 50 percent of Malaysia's people are of the native Malay cultural group. They practice Islam and are called Muslims, and they traditionally live in rural villages called *kampongs*. About one third of Malaysia's people are ethnically Chinese and about 10 percent are ethnically Indian (from India). The British brought both groups to Malaysia to work in mines and on plantations. The rest of Malaysia's people are other native and migrant minorities.

2. Have students read Selina's story in class to themselves. When they have completed the reading, have students jot down five characteristics of work and life for women in the free trade zone. Use this list to guide discussion of the article among your students. During discussion of the reading, transfer the key ideas from Buang's chapter to your students or provide some background on the subject before you use the reading (you may make this choice based upon the preferred learning styles of your students). Highlight the difference between Malay Muslim social and moral expectations and Selina's new experiences.

Point out that many developing countries have established Free Trade Zones to attract capital investment and create jobs. Many American, Japanese, and European corporations have built factories in these areas because of the availability of cheap labor. That labor is usually female. Around the world women have had to accept lower wages than men for the same type of work, and the foreign corporations believe that women are more submissive workers and are not as likely to form labor unions or cause problems. When large numbers of young women begin to do new kinds of work outside of the home, many individuals in the society may develop either positive or negative stereotypes about the women who do that work. In Malaysia, young women (16-18) are recruited from the *kampongs* to work in Pulau Pinang (Penang), a large island urban area off the northwest coast of Malaysia. Many families need the income produced by the young women who work in computer-chip factories, but they also think that their daughters are subject to negative influences because of the working environment. In Malaysia, Pulau Pinang is perceived to be a fast-paced, westernized state with many opportunities for strangers to take advantage of young, rural women. This in turn causes hardships for the women, because they are then perceived to be a poor choice as a wife when marriages are arranged. Many Malay men (not all) prefer a *kampong wife* because she will know only the traditional way of life. Ask your class why they think many men would prefer a traditional wife to one who works outside the home.

To bring closure to the discussion, make a special note about the connection between the young Malay women, as represented by Selina, and your own class through the computers they use. Malaysia is the world's largest producer of computer chips, so it is likely that any one of us has a computer with Malaysian-made chips.

3. The following exercise will assist students in assessing the formation of job and gender stereotypes in their local communities and its comparison to the Malay Muslim situation. (This segment could immediately follow the above activity depending on the amount of time devoted to discussion, or this segment could take an entire class period itself.)

Students will create a survey form in class that deals with attitudes about women's work in the local community. To save time, the teacher might want to create a form and pass it out to the students at the end of step one. Otherwise, the class period can be devoted to students forming groups to work on different segments of the survey, or the entire class can work as a whole with the teacher. By the end of the class, the survey form should be ready for typing and reproduction. At this point, decide whether you want to survey 200, 500 or even 1000 people (you could do more or less, but you must have enough so that students can see trends in people's attitudes). Emphasize to students that this is a serious exercise, and that they should not compromise it by fabricating their (or the respondents') data or not taking it seriously. Each student in the class will be assigned to survey *x* number of people. That is, if 25 students are in the class and each surveys eight people, then you will have 200 survey forms with information to be analyzed. You can have students do the survey that evening with their family and neighbors (obviously, this is not a random sample), or you can give them more time. If you choose the latter, then the next step will be delayed until the students return with their forms.

You should guide students in creating a survey that includes at least the following sample questions. You may add additional questions or others according to your students' interest, e.g.:

a. Who could best perform the following work (men, women or both):
homemaker; _____ welder; _____ lawyer; _____ dancer; _____ hairdresser; _____
politician; _____ nurse; _____ auto body repair; _____ teacher; _____ priest; _____

b. Do you know of an occupation where women get paid less than men for the same type of work?

c. Identify an occupation that you consider unsuitable for women.

d. Identify an occupation that you would definitely not allow a woman in your family to do (assuming you could influence her choice).

e. If you are planning to get married, and you are a woman, is there any type of job that you might have that you think would prejudice a person against marrying you? If you are a man, is there any type of job that your potential wife might have had that would prejudice you against marrying her?

f. Characteristics of the interviewee:
Male _____ Female _____ Age _____

Concluding the Activity:
4. Have students count up the responses on the forms they bring in to class. In order to determine whether or not a difference exists between men's and women's attitudes (or even by age), each question must be counted in terms of gender and age. A chart should be made for each question on a blank page. Question #1 will need a chart each for: jobs that only women are expected to have; jobs that only men are expected to have; and jobs that both men and women can do.

	Jobs for Men		Jobs for Women	
Age	18-40	41+	18-40	41+
Occupation				
teacher	27	13	73	51
welder	32	16	52	64
(list others)				

List the response under the appropriate column. Repeat for each question. Each student should have one page with all of this information for each question.

In class, divide students into five groups (or more if you have more questions). Give all the tally sheets for a particular question to each group. They are to tally all the sheets into one final copy, which can be reported on the chalk board. Then discuss the results. Are certain occupations definitely associated with women? Are there negative stereotypes about women in certain types of jobs? Is there a difference between men and women in their attitudes? Is there a difference in attitudes depending on a person's age?

Each group should formulate at least two reasons why they think the responses were the way they were. When this is complete, discuss in an open forum with the teacher facilitating the discussion between groups. Then, on a transparency, project the tables of information from Buang's study. Ask students to compare and contrast the situation for women in their community to those of Malaysia. Discuss similarities and differences.

Evaluating the Activity:
Completion of the in-class work, participation in the survey, and discussion of the results all provide adequate opportunities for evaluation. If, however, a teacher would like to evaluate students further, he or she could assign an essay, asking students to describe their perceptions of women's work and whether those attitudes have changed as a result of this learning activity.

Sources: Chapter 3 in this publication, "Development and Factory Women: Negative Perceptions from a Malaysian Source Area" by Amriah Buang; Grossman, R. (1985) "Miss Micro," *New Internationalist*, No. 150, August: 12-13.

Alternative Strategies or Extensions:
Students can enter their data into the computer and create tables, pie charts, or graphs to illustrate their results. These, with accompanying information from Buang's chapter can be displayed on a school bulletin board. Essays on the subject by the students could be published in the school newspaper

SELINA'S STORY

Selina is a twenty-year-old Malaysian woman. Like many women of her age and background, Selina left her rural home to find factory work in one of Malaysia's free trade zones. Selina is employed by a U.S. owned electronics firm which manufactures and tests silicon microchips in a factory in Pulau Pinang.

Selina says:
When I started work with this company, I was put in the official test section where I had to look through a microscope to test the chips before they were bonded. It took me two weeks to get used to using the microscope. After the training period they set my quota at 15 trays a day. I think there are between 160-180 chips in each tray, so I tested about 3,500 chips a day.

At the moment my current shift starts at 6 A.M. It finishes at 2 P.M. They don't allow us to talk during our work, but we can talk during our breaks. We have a 10 minute break at 8 A.M. and a 15 minute "lunch" break at 9:15 A.M.

Every two weeks they rotate our shifts. They seem to think we like this to happen, but it really makes life very difficult especially for those women who have children. Next week, I will start work at 2 P.M. and work through to 10 P.M. It's difficult to readjust our sleeping and eating patterns and it makes it impossible for us to find additional work or study in our off-duty hours. I think they want to keep us dependent on them.

I earn the equivalent of about $175 per month and I try to send as much of it as possible to my parents and five sisters at home. But I do have rent, food and transport costs. Also, my friends and I like to get dressed up in Western clothes, put on make-up and go out on dates. We would all like to find husbands here because, although we miss our families, it will be hard for us to return home and marry the men our parents have picked for us.

My parents are devout Muslims and they see my time here as temporary. To them, I am helping to support the family until I return home to marry. Then, maybe, one of my other sisters will come to work here.

But I quite like the freedom I have here and the Western lifestyle the company promotes. For example, each year the company runs a beauty contest which we are encouraged to enter. The first prize is a package tour to Medan; second prize is a cassette player and third prize a night for two at the Rasa Sayang—the most expensive hotel in Penang. My mother would be horrified if she knew about the third prize. "What would a good Muslim girl be doing at the Rasa Sayang for the night?" she would ask.

Anyway, I will not be winning anything. Many of the girls call me "Grandma" because working with the microscope has made my eyes bad and I have to wear glasses. Many of the workers here wear glasses. A number of us would like to do something about the conditions in the factory. Apart from eye strain, there are chemicals in the factory which burn if they are spilt. The company is opposed to us forming a union. They would sack us if they thought we were doing that. They prefer us to compete with each other rather than stand together.

We know that our company is American because Americans come to the factory sometimes and explain that the microchips are shipped to the U.S. when we have finished with them. I often wonder if there are women in the U.S. doing the same sort of work as me and, if so, what their conditions and pay are like.

Excerpted from Grossman, R. 1985. "Miss Micro," *New Internationalist*, August 150: 12-13.

4

Gender and Spatial Population Mobility in Iran[**]

Mohammad Hemmasi

Gender-related differentials in mobility and migration have long been noted in social science literature. In the nineteenth century, Ravenstein (1885) introduced five aspects of differential mobility along gender lines. Most migration studies inspired by his *laws* focused on men or assumed similarity between the sexes (see review by Simmons *et al.* 1977; Fattahi 1988, e.g.). Lee (1966) also pointed to possible gender-related differences in the migration process in his seminal "push-pull" theory of migration. In 1970, Boserup's book on women and economic development drew attention to the connections between regional differences in the gender division of labor in the Third World and gender differences in migration patterns. Though her work has since been clarified and qualified, issues she raised about the predicament of women in the poorer countries, especially rural migrant women, are still valid. The importance of women's contribution to the development process and their vulnerable position in many societies led to the designation of 1975-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women.

In the past, most Third World migration studies focused on rural out-migration and resultant rapid urbanization. In these studies the typical migrants are young men who leave their villages in search of employment or better jobs. Women are assumed to be accompanying them or following them as *attached* members of the family.

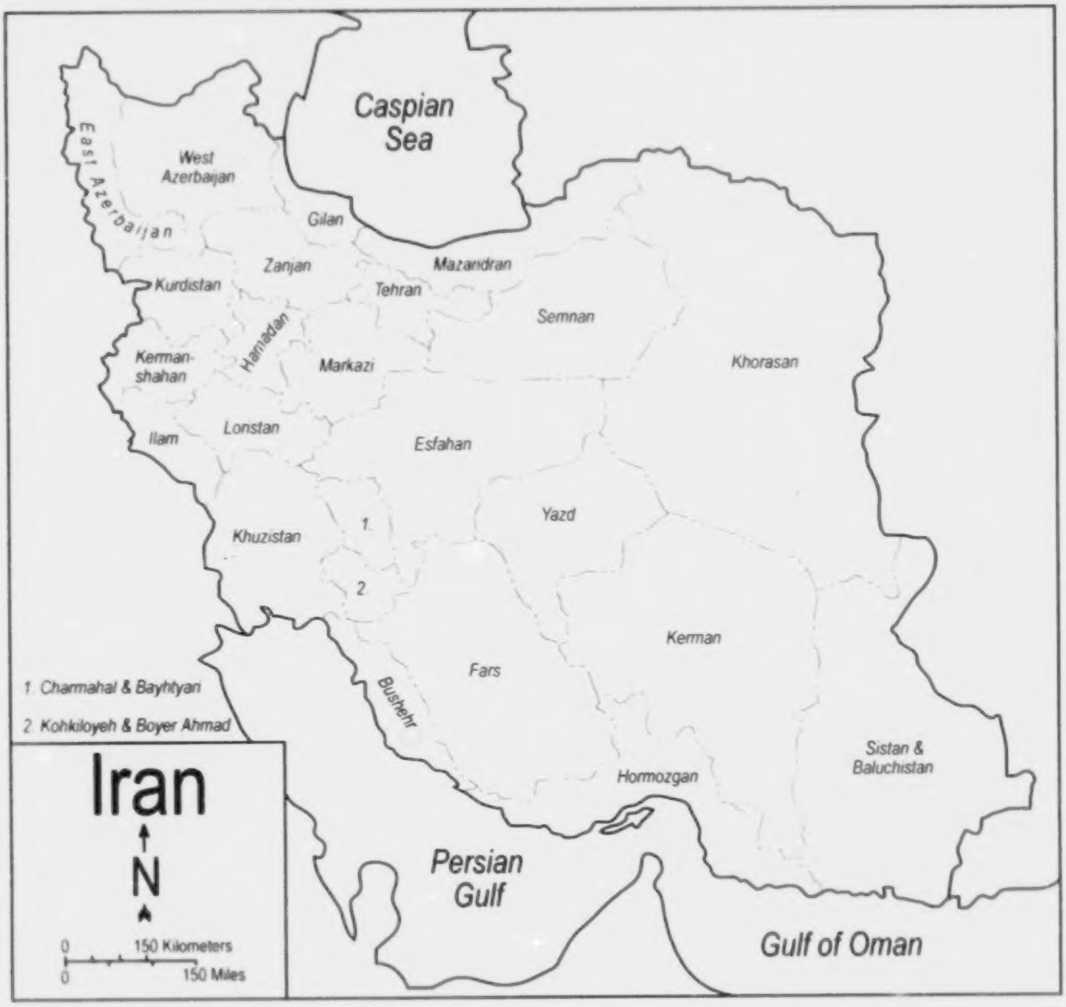
Although some empirical evidence supports this assumption, the causes, processes, and consequences of migration are often different for the men and women involved (Pedraza 1991). Moreover, migration as a cultural-specific process is greatly affected by the social, political, economic, and religious contexts in which migrants make their decisions. In the developing world, female migration rates and reasons for their moving vary significantly from region to region. Whereas Latin American women, for example, often move unaccompanied, Muslim women are usually restricted by cultural mores from migrating or even traveling alone (Tienda and Booth 1991; Paul 1992; Gulick and Gulick 1976, 1978). Khoo *et al.* (1984) observed similar contrasts between women of Southeast Asian and South Asian regions, e.g., Thailand and India. Although changes in Muslim women's social position have received growing attention, their spatial mobility has rarely been examined (Kandiyoti 1991; Beck and Keddie 1979; Wadud-Muhsin 1992; Salili 1979; Gulick and Gulick 1976, 1978; Toth 1991). Anthropologists and sociologists have traditionally been more conscious of gender differentials and migration than have economists and geographers, although a greater interest on the part of the latter group seems to be an emerging trend (Stapleton 1982; Tienda 1991; Momsen and Townsend 1987; Brydon and Chant 1988; McDowell 1992).

In representing this recent trend, this essay attempts to analyze the spatial patterns of internal migration of women and men within the context of Iran's Islamic patriarchal cultural system. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

(a) Are Iranian men more mobile than Iranian women?
(b) Do Iranian men move longer distances than Iranian women?
(c) What were the effects of the Iran-Iraq War on the volume and direction of migration streams?
(d) What are the causes and consequences of women's migration in Iran?

The study is restricted to the period from 1976-1986 for two reasons. First, this decade is of interest since it covers a time of profound social and political changes in Iran (Figures 4.1, 4.2). Second, more extensive analysis is limited by the availability of data on gender and mobility at several spatial scales. Most of the data used here are drawn from the *National Census of Population and Housing of Iran*, the latest taken in October 1986.

[**] Originally published in *GEOFORUM*, Vol. 25, No. 2. pp. 213-216. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd. Used by permission with some adaptations.


Caspian Sea
West Azerbaijan
East Azerbaijan
Gilan
Zanjan
Mazandran
Tehran
Kurdistan
Semnan
Hamadan
Kerman-shahan
Markazi
Khorasan
Ilam
Loristan
Esfahan
Yazd
Khuzistan
1.
2
Kerman
Fars
Bushehr
Hormozgan
Sistan & Baluchistan
1. Charmahal & Bayhtyan
2. Kohkiloyeh & Boyer Ahmad
Iran
N
0
150 Kilometers
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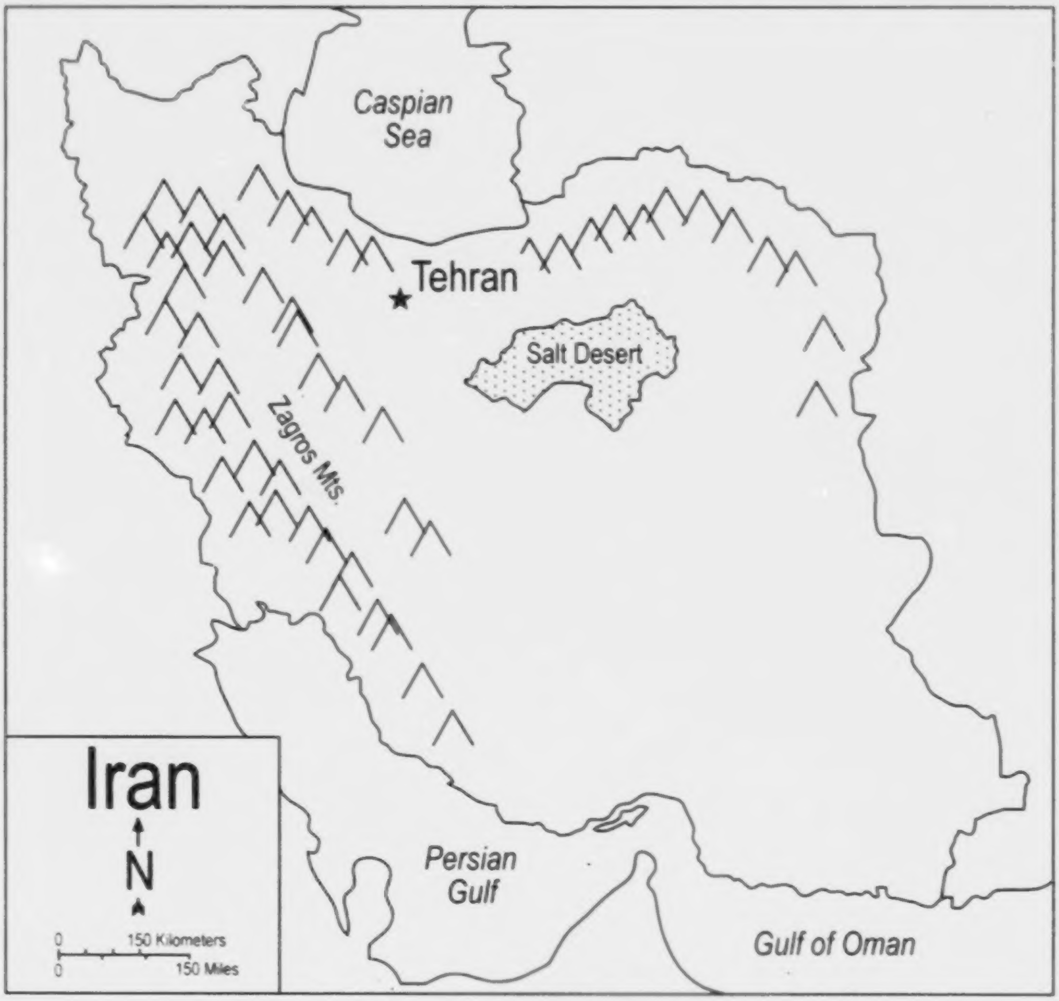
150 Miles
Persian Gulf
Gulf of Oman

4.1 Iran and Its Provinces


Caspian Sea
Tehran
Salt Desert
Zagros Mts.
Persian Gulf
Gulf of Oman
Iran
N
0 150 Kilometers
0 150 Miles

4.2 Iran, Physical Features

The Position of Iranian Women

Before we begin to examine Iranian women's spatial mobility, it is necessary to understand the cultural contexts in which they make their decisions to migrate. The position of women in the Muslim world, especially Iranian women, has been the topic of writing by Western scholars and an increasing number of nationals themselves (Beck and Keddie 1978; Afshar 1985a, 1985b; Salili 1979; Sedghi and Ashraf 1976; Pakizegi 1979; Nassehy 1991; Sullivan 1991; Friedl 1989). Because of a wide gap in every aspect of social and economic life between rural and urban populations, we will briefly examine the following four interrelated dimensions: education, employment, marriage, and political participation along gender and residential lines.

Literacy Rates

Literacy rates have increased steadily for all groups since the 1950s, when the first national census reported on the educational status of the population (Table 4.1). It is disappointing that after decades of having compulsory educational laws on the books, consistent male-female and rural-urban differences continue in educational attainment. The highest literacy rate belongs to the urban male (>80 percent) and the lowest belongs to the rural female, at about 36 percent. In Iran, elementary and secondary schools are gender-segregated, but higher educational institutions—post-diploma and university—are gender integrated. The women have showed remarkable achievements in competing at the university entrance examinations, as well as in their academic performance in various fields.

Table 4.1 shows that women's literacy has steadily increased. The government policy of spatial decentralization includes establishment of many technical colleges and universities in the provincial cities. Most of these institutions have supervised dormitories for women who come from other regions. As a result, women's mobility for educational purposes is growing much faster than for employment-related reasons (King and Hill 1992).

Table 4.1. Education by Sex and Rural-Urban Residence in Iran, 1956-1986

	Literacy Rate			
	Urban		Rural	
Year	Male	Female	Male	Female
1956	45.2	20.6	10.8	1.0
1966	61.4	38.3	25.4	4.3
1976	74.4	55.6	43.6	17.3
1986	80.4	65.4	60.0	36.3

Source: *1989-1990 Statistical Yearbook*. 1991. Statistical Center of Iran : 58 and 103.

Employment

In contrast to women's educational achievements, their entrance into the salaried employment positions has been severely limited (Table 4.2). In Iran, as in other Islamic states, only about 10 percent of adult women are considered economically active (Nuss 1992; Afshar 1985a; Hollos 1991). The United Nations projects that in the Islamic states, female economic activity rates may reach 19 percent by the year 2000, still the lowest in the world (Nuss 1992). Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, women's economic activities declined to their lowest level since 1956. In addition to the governmental restrictions on women's employment, general economic stagnation and high unemployment rates also contributed to this decline. Even to come close to the United Nations' projection, the government would have to allocate far more resources to new job creation and job training for women than it is doing now.

Currently, Iranian women have a limited range of employment opportunities or sources of income. According to the 1986 census results, 72 percent of all the employed urban women engaged in community, social, and personal services, especially in teaching and health related occupations. Approximately 12 percent of them were in industries and the rest were distributed in sales and other activities. In rural areas, about 55 percent of employed women worked in agricultural activities, 33 percent in household industries—carpet and textile making—and 8 percent in community and social services. At the national level, 75 percent of the "economically inactive" women aged ten years and over were homemakers and nearly 18 percent were students. Although homemakers contribute significantly to the overall well being of the family, they are, nevertheless, heavily dependent on the male waged members. Nuss (1992: 119) concluded that "economic independence is a precondition for self-reliance. To be economically independent, women need access to the resources of society on an equal basis with men." In this respect, Iranian women have a long way to go before they achieve equal access to employment, independence, and self-reliance. Their economic dependence on the adult working men of the family affects their spatial mobility more than any other condition.

Table 4.2. Labor Force Participation by Sex and Rural-Urban Residence in Iran, 1956-1986

	Economic activity rate (in percent)			
	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1956	78.5	9.0	86.6	9.2
1966	69.2	9.9	82.9	14.3
1976	63.9	9.0	77.9	16.6
1986	66.8	8.4	70.3	7.9

Source: *1989-1990 Statistical Yearbook*. 1991. Statistical Center of Iran : 58 and 103.

Marital Status

Another aspect of Iranian society with strong bearing on women's spatial mobility is early and universal marriage (Table 4.3). In 1986, 32.5 percent of urban and 35 percent of rural female teenagers had been married at least once. Generally, urban men get married the latest and rural females the earliest in life. A recent increase in the urban male marriage rate is a new trend which emerged along with an upsurge in the fertility rate during the post-revolutionary period (Aghajanian 1991). The mean age of marriage has remained relatively stable, however, except among urban men who registered a decline from 25.1 to 24.2 years of age in this decade. During the early 1970s, because of the Family Protection Laws and rapid socioeconomic growth, age at first marriage increased and mortality and fertility registered a lowering trend. With the advent of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the Family Protection Laws were abolished and modernizing processes stopped (Momeni 1981; Afshar 1985b; Brydon and Chant 1988: 31). For example, legal age at first marriage was once again lowered to 15 for girls and 18 for boys, and the family planning program was abandoned.

Since 1987, the government has revived the family planning program, resulting in a decline of the population growth rate from 3.4 percent to 2.7 percent per year. Although the divorce rate has risen in the country, no evidence as yet supports a higher age at first marriage (Nassehy 1991). Without access to decent waged employment opportunities for a great majority of women—in both rural and urban areas—marriage becomes an appealing option available to them. Under these circumstances, one expects a significant relationship between marital status and female spatial mobility in the patriarchal Iranian society.

Table 4.3 Nuptiality Measures in Iran, 1976-1986

	Percent Ever Married			
	Urban		Rural	
Age	Male	Female	Male	Female
1976				
15-19	3.5	30.5	10.2	38.0
20-24	30.2	73.9	52.8	83.6
25-29	71.3	90.8	85.8	95.7
1986				
15-19	4.3	32.5	9.2	34.7
20-24	34.9	72.3	34.4	90.1
25-29	77.0	89.2	90.1	92.0

Source: *1989-1990 Statistical Yearbook*. 1991. Statistical Center of Iran : 54.

Women in Politics

Women's participation in the political affairs of the state has changed favorably, considering the way they were treated by the franchise section (Article 10) of the early twentieth century Iranian Constitution (Sedghi and Ashraf 1976: 208).

> Those deprived of the right to vote shall consist of all females, minors and those under guardians; fraudulent bankrupts, beggars and those who earn their living in a disreputable way; murderers, thieves and other criminals.

The marginal role of women in the political sphere remained intact until 1963, when they received equal rights to men, electing people for and being elected to public office. In the same year, out of 197 elected deputies to the *majlis* (the house of representatives) six were women (3 percent). Later, just before the 1979 revolution, 21 women were elected to the same legislative body. In the latest election held in 1992, only 9 women entered the *majlis*, an improvement over the two previous elections held under the Islamic regime. To accommodate women's concerns, the government recently appointed a woman to the post of vice president in charge of women's affairs, an unenviable position considering the prevailing political climate.

Lack of consideration for women's choices is reflected, for example, in the way government authorities, who are generally men, have approached the controversial veil or *hejab* issue. Though the pre-revolutionary Pahlavi regime banned the veil, and the Islamic regime reinstated it, neither allowed women themselves to have a choice in how to dress in public. Both regimes have been undemocratic, harsh, and at times violent in implementing their decisions when it comes to issues concerning women. So far, women have had greater success in educational attainment than in political or economic spheres. Despite many setbacks, they have not given up hope and determination for gaining equal rights and opportunities commensurate with their social responsibilities.

Women's Spatial Mobility

Within this context of relative social and economic immobility, how do Iranian women compare with men in spatial mobility? The information presented in Table 4.4 provides a partial answer to the overall patterns of gender differences in migration in Iran. According to the 1986 census, a migrant is a person who experienced a change in *shahrestan* (county) or *ostan* (province) of residence between 1976 and 1986 (Figure 4.1). The percentage of women and men who changed residence during the decade is fairly similar (about 17 percent for urban and 8 percent for rural), with slightly higher percentages of women than men moving. However, if we consider various spatial scales, some notable sex differentials emerge. At the intra-county and intra-province levels—short and medium distance—rural women are the dominant group, as reflected in the sex ratios of 82 and 99. Conversely, when considering in-migration flows of inter-provincial and international levels—long distance—the men exceed women (sex ratios of 104 and 124).

Table 4.4 In-Migrants of All Ages by Sex and Rural-Urban Residence during 1976-1986

	Sex and residence place in 1976-86					
	Urban (000) M/F			Rural (000) M/F		
Place of residence since 1976	Male	Female	(00)	Male	Female	(00)
Intra-county	640	604	106	306	375	82
Intra-provincial	539	531	102	227	230	99
Inter-provincial	806	825	98	200	192	104
Foreign countries	310	259	120	224	181	124
Total migrants	2,295	2,219	103	957	978	98
Total population	13,769	13,075	105	11,384	10,965	104
Percent migrants		16.7	17.0		8.4	8.9

Source: *National Census of Population and Housing (Iran)*. October 1986.

Table 4.5 presents the results of further analyses of inter-provincial migration for men and women, along with several sex ratio measures. Demographically, Iran, like many other developing countries, is a masculine society with 105 men for every 100 women. Every province has more men than women—albeit with a moderate variation. Sex ratios of half of the provinces are within one percent of the national average. The spatial variations in sex ratios for in-migrants, however, vary between 88 and 109 men per 100 women. The overall sex ratio of 99 indicates that at the inter-provincial level women in-migrants exceeded men by at least 1 percent. The lowest sex ratio among the in-migrants, i.e., 88, is recorded for the populations aged 20-29 years old (Figure 4.3). Spatially, it is also the most varied index. The lowest sex ratios for this age group belong to the two socially more progressive northern provinces of Mazandran (63) and Gilan (64), and the highest belongs to the rural-tribal province of Kohkiloyeh and Boyer Ahmad (Boyer Ahmadi-ye Sardir va Kohkiluyeh in south-west Iran in the Zagros Mountains). In this age group, the predominance of in-migrant women is mainly related to *marriage migration* practiced in the Islamic patriarchal social system.

Table 4.5. Sex ratio and Inter-provincial Women Migration Indexes, Iran, 1976-1986

Provinces	All In-migrants	In-migrants aged 20-29	Net-migration rate (000)
Bushehr	97	74	87.1
Tehran	98	70	56.9
Hormozgan	108	76	42.1
Esfahan	100	68	24.7
Far	100	75	18.8
Byer Ahmad	107	91	18.8
Semnan	101	66	5.3
Yazd	103	72	4.6
Khorasan	103	83	2.8
Kerman	101	77	2.7
Mazandran	88	63	0.2
Baluchistan	109	89	-2.2
W. Azarbaijan	97	71	-7.0
Ila	104	90	-9.7
Kermanshahan	99	77	-12.5
Bakhtiyari	98	76	-14.7
Zanja	98	83	-17.3
Gilan	88	64	-18.7
Central (Markazi)	93	74	-22.8
Loristan	99	81	-23.7
Kurdistan	95	73	-30.9
Hamadan	98	80	-34.6
E. Azarbaijan	103	83	-55.1
Khuzistan	98	89	-100.6
Iran	99	88	

Source: *National Census of Population and Housing (Iran).* October 1986.

During the decade two main migration flows were in operation: first, the traditional migration channels between peripheral provinces, such as West Azarbaijan and Sistan and Baluchistan to the Tehran province; second, a surge in the number of out-migrants and displaced population from the war-affected provinces along the western border with Iraq to the central and southern provinces.

The information presented in Table 4.5 represents aggregate measures of female migration. The overall patterns shown are very consistent: Bushehr, Tehran, and Hormozgan were the top gainers, whereas Khuzistan, East Azarbaijan, and Hamadan were the major losers of population during the decade. Socio-economic change caused the heavy losses of rural population by East Azarbaijan and Hamadan to the urban Tehran province. As far as gender and mobility are concerned, the highly significant figures between female and male in-migration, reported at the bottom of the table, again reveal the *associational* nature of migration patterns in Iran. Distance usually has a deterrent effect on migration. Despite some differences in the definitions of migration and the number of observations, the relationship holds true in both pre- and post-revolutionary periods. Although male migration is the most powerful determinant of female migration in Iran, still the distance variable emerges as significant for both. Thus, Iranian men and women respond to the hindering effect of distance identically.

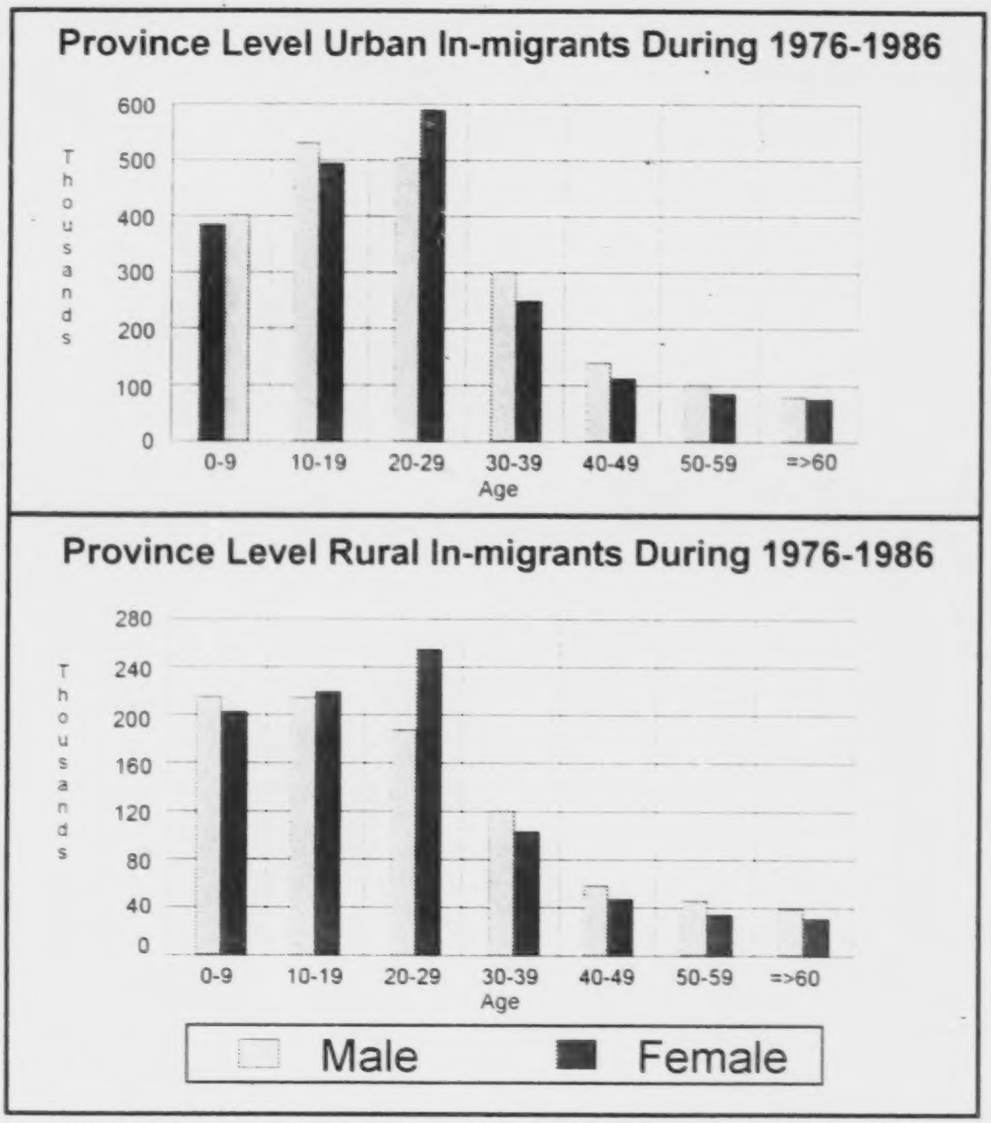
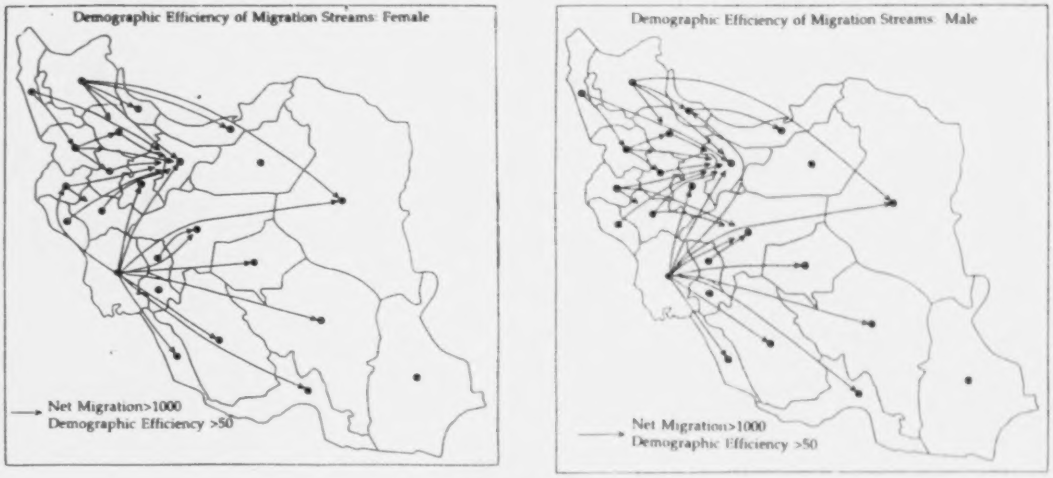

Province Level Urban In-migrants During 1976-1986
Thousands
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
0-9
10-19
20-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
=>60
Age
Province Level Rural In-migrants During 1976-1986
Thousands
280
240
200
160
120
80
40
0
0-9
10-19
20-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
=>60
Age
Male
Female

Figure 4.3

A close examination of the flow maps (Figure 4.4) reveals a remarkable similarity in spatial patterns of women and men's mobility during the decade. First, Tehran province was a consistent destination for migration streams from nine provinces. Second, Khuzistan was the major origin of migration flows to Tehran, as well as to most other provinces. Third, the East Azarbaijan province, a traditional source of out-migration, continued to decline in population, losing nearly half a million migrants. Three of the five major destinations of the province's female out-migration streams were not contiguous to its territory (Table 4.5). Fourth, the general direction of out-flows were from the war-affected western provinces to the central and eastern provinces. As of 1992, four years after the cease-fire between Iran and Iraq, only half a million of the displaced population had gone back to their homes. Lack of water, housing, sanitation facilities, and more importantly, the presence of mines prevent the people from returning. With no international help, the Iranian government has been very slow in reconstructing ruined cities and villages in the region.

To interpret the observed gender-related migration patterns, we need to understand the causes and consequences of women's mobility in the context of the Iranian social system.



Demographic Efficiency of Migration Streams: Female

Demographic Efficiency of Migration Streams: Male

Figure 4.4

Causes of Women's Migration

An extensive survey of labor force quality conducted by the government in 1972 provided valuable information about causes of migration (Statistical Center of Iran 1974). The reasons given by migrants for moving to Tehran City vary considerably for women and men. Although more than 10 percent of men moved specifically to seek work, less than one percent of women reported this as their main reason. Out of more than nine hundred thousand men, nearly half of them (49.24 percent) migrated to Tehran for job-related reasons, but only about one percent of women migrated for a similar purpose. More than 80 percent of women migrants followed their parents and husbands. Another 15 percent were *marriage migrants* who moved as a result of a change in their marital status. A distinguishing feature of female migration as compared to male migration is the importance of marriage as a reason for migration. Similar patterns were found in other studies conducted after 1972 in Esfahan, Shiraz, and Tehran (Gulick and Gulick 1976, Fattahi, 1988). Thus, women's spatial mobility is mainly *associational migration* rather than *autonomous migration*.

Unmarried girls are closely supervised by their parents or brothers and upon marriage the husband becomes the primary decision-maker in most households' socioeconomic matters, including decisions about migration. After the wedding ceremony, the bride moves to the residence of her husband or his parents' home until the couple is able to have its own house. According to the 1976 census, more than 15 percent of rural brides aged 20-24 lived with their mothers-in-law. Since women do not have a fair share of the productive power in the society, they have to depend on the male family members for social and economic support. Numerous studies have found that even those who do work for pay and have monetary income usually do not have a chance to decide the way the money is spent within the family (Touba 1975). Women, however, enjoy a greater amount of freedom and power in "private" matters, as opposed to "public" spheres which are highly dominated by men (Williams 1989).

Consequences of Women's Migration

Analyses of the consequences of migration can be approached from several perspectives: the effect of migration on a) the origin region, b) the destination region, and c) the migrants themselves. In light of the fragmentary nature of research on migration in Iran, especially female migration, this study only deals with the position of migrants. According to Tienda and Booth (1991: 55):

> Migration could promote social mobility, economic independence and relative autonomy if women's moves are accompanied by an increased participation in wage employment and provide them more control over their earnings or, at a minimum, greater participation in family decision-making.

Since an overwhelming proportion of Iranian women are usually associational migrants or *tied movers* who migrate for the purpose of accompanying or joining the male primary migrants, they seldom participate in a wage-earning occupations at the destination. As is true in many other societies, employed women are likely to lose their jobs or be forced to engage in lower-paying jobs at the destination (Morrison 1988; Shihadeh 1991). For example, in 1972, out of 13,647 women migrants who were employed before moving to Tehran, 5,160 or 38 percent of them fell into the *economically inactive* category after the move.

Boserup (1970) observed that the occupation of a woman at the destination is greatly influenced by the nature of her employment at the origin. Rural women engaged in an income-earning activity should have a higher chance of securing employment in the city than those who did not. Iranian women, however, rarely have access to salaried work in the rural areas. Furthermore, their agricultural work experience can hardly help them enter the modern job market, even if urban employment were available. Boserup (1970) also pointed out that "often geographical moves not only failed to improve women's positions in the labor market but that gender inequalities were often greater in modern urban contexts compared to traditional rural areas (Tienda and Booth 1991: 68)." Her observations hold true for Iranian women in several other spheres which are examined below.

Rural migrant women usually have a more limited "activity space" (e.g., the space in which they carried out most of their daily activities) and range of functions in the city than they had in the countryside (Fazli 1988; Paul 1992). Migration to the large city often does not lead to social and economic mobility, especially for women (Findlay 1980). In the village, they wear simple but utilitarian clothes and are free to visit neighbors, friends, and relatives. While working on the farm, tending animals or weaving carpets, they come in contact with other men and women. At home, they prepare food, maintain the house, and care for children (Nikkolgh 1991). In the city, migrant households that were originally from rural areas usually live in smaller places than in the rural areas from whence they migrated (often one room), the women usually do not work outside the home, and the women's housework is reduced substantially. When they go out shopping or visiting friends or relatives, they must wear *chador* or *maqnaeh,* the traditional covering garment worn by Iranian urban women. They must adjust to a much larger but less familiar place with much less access to relatives for social interaction and financial support in times of emergency than they had in the rural areas. If the male primary worker (the breadwinner) cannot find a steady job, the family may have to move from district to district or even city to city, adding more stress to an already stressful life for women and children (Brown 1983).

The stress of displacement often affects the health of women migrants more severely than men. A detailed analysis of health conditions and health facilities used by the migrants described the women's conditions in Tehran as follows (Stromberg *et al.* 1974: 315):

> Compared with other categories, adult female migrants have especially high reported sickness rates, either as head of household (52.1 percent), parent of head of household (36.4 percent), or wife of head of household (28.5 percent).
>
> Concerning their "action space" the study concluded that (Stromberg *et al.* 1974: 320): there are few places for these migrant women to go in Tehran aside from the brief shopping trips they make for food and other necessities... It is much more difficult for women to see their relatives or friends in the city, and the well-defined functional relationships prevailing in the village are not clearly developed in the city.

Despite the difficulties associated with migration in general, and rural-urban migration in particular, women migrants in the city may have less harsh work than they previously did in agriculture, and for the most part, they have access to more and varied food resources. They have high hopes for a better life, if not for themselves, then for their children who usually attend schools in the city. The life support resources of Iranian villages simply cannot accommodate the persisting high natural population growth of over 3 percent per year; the alternative to migration could be destitution and hunger for all. Rarely do any migrants intend to go back to the village life they have left behind.

Within the city, several mechanisms of adjustment may facilitate women's transition to urban life. First, several migrant families from the same village or district may live in the same neighborhood and act as sources of information and a stepping-stone to a job or housing. Migrant women of similar ethnic background or origin district may exchange visits and help each other in various ways (Stromberg 1974; Fazli 1988). Information, products, and people also flow constantly between the village and the city. Frequent return visits can help maintain familiar social ties with relatives back home. Despite all the difficulties from which migrant women may suffer, the majority of them are still far better off in the city than they would have been had they stayed in the impoverished villages or economically stagnant small towns while their men worked in the large city.

Women who move for educational purposes are usually from urban areas and relatively more autonomous in their decision than rural migrants. At the destination, they may live in dormitories, supervised by school administrators, and enjoy the group support of their fellow students. Moreover, they have strived to pass the university entrance examinations and are willing to move into a new setting. They hope to finish a degree which is still highly valued in Iran. Educated women have a much higher probability of getting a salaried job and moving independently than other women.

Conclusions

This study attempts to answer several questions concerning gender and migration in the context of the Iranian social system during 1976-1986. It shows that, despite women's relative social and economic immobility, they are spatially as mobile as men. The strongest determinants of women's migration are men's migration, followed by the road distance between the origin and destination (Table 4.5). A number of factors are responsible for the persistence of this strong relationship. First, the traditional and Islamic social systems discourage women from achieving equality with men in most public affairs. Second, women are grossly underrepresented in the political organizations, educational institutions, and modern productive sectors. Third, the revolutions and political changes of the twentieth century have failed to improve the position of women substantially.

As a result, most Iranian women are dependent on adult male members of the household to provide for them. It is this economic dependency, along with strong family ties and traditional cultural values, that influences women's migration patterns. In general, women's migration is more of an associational type than an autonomous one. The former refers to the migration of a woman as part of a larger family unit, often in response to the decision that more directly affects the primary mover, usually the husband and parents. Limited instances of autonomous migration occur when educated professional women move to a new location, students attend institutions of higher education in cities other than where their parents' live, or unattached women (e.g., divorcees and widows) head households and move with their children.

Consequences of migration for women vary according to the reasons for the move and the nature of origins and destinations. For example, despite all the hardship that women may endure because of migration, rural migrants who follow their breadwinners would suffer even more if they stayed in impoverished villages. In contrast, education-induced migration opens a potential avenue for entering the modern job market and greater relative freedom in life. Migration in the developing world, and especially in Iran, is an imperative of the fundamental demographic, economic, and social changes that are concomitant with development. Although the process is bound to continue, its causes and consequences must change, allowing women a more active role than they currently have.

The Iran-Iraq War contributed to the volume and direction of internal migration in Iran. The displaced population from the western provinces swelled the tide of demographic growth in the central and southern provinces substantially. Because of slow governmental progress in providing infrastructure and safety, the majority of the displaced population has not been able to return to their homes. Furthermore, the migration streams from poorer peripheral regions to the more central developed provinces continued during the decade. The spatial distribution of province-level sex ratios indicate that, generally, the migration process includes all household members rather than merely male members. The causes, processes, and consequences of migration remain highly gender-specific in Iran, with no sign of notable changes in the near future.

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Learning Activity

Following In My Family's Footsteps: Explaining Migration In Iran

Beth Mitchneck

Introduction:
Migration is movement from one residence to another. The movement can be within the same city or between regions or countries. At the present time, more people are moving from place to place than at any other time in world history. Why do people migrate? Social scientists have identified a number of reasons. We call these reasons determinants of migration. These determinants can vary by human environmental factors such as political, cultural or economic context or by individual factors such as gender, race, or ethnicity. Human environmental factors describe the combination of social and economic characteristics of all people living in a place or who have migrated. Environmental factors also describe the natural, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics of a place that all people there experience. Individual factors describe the social and economic characteristics of specific people who migrate. In this learning activity, students will learn frameworks for analysis of migration, map migration processes, interpret the spatial patterns, and analyze social and economic data by gender. They will also learn how these frameworks may vary by cultural context, in particular the Islamic context in Iran.

Grade Level: 10-12

Time Required: 2 to 3 class periods

Standards Implemented*: The geographically informed person knows and understands

1. how to use maps, globes, and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
6. how culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.
9. the characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
17. how to apply geography to interpret the past.

Skills: This learning activity requires students to:
- locate places on maps
- ask how men and women make migration decisions
- interpret demographic data
- map data
- analyze data for similarities and differences in people's migration experiences

Geographic Vocabulary and Concepts: migration, gender differentials

Objectives: As a result of this learning activity students will:
- learn to map and interpret demographic data
- identify gender differentials in socio-economic characteristics and human mobility
- identify and differentiate between environmental and individual determinants of migration

Materials: Copies of data tables, outline maps of Iran (Figures 4.5 and 4.6), map of Iran (Chapter 4, Figure 4.1), exercise sheets

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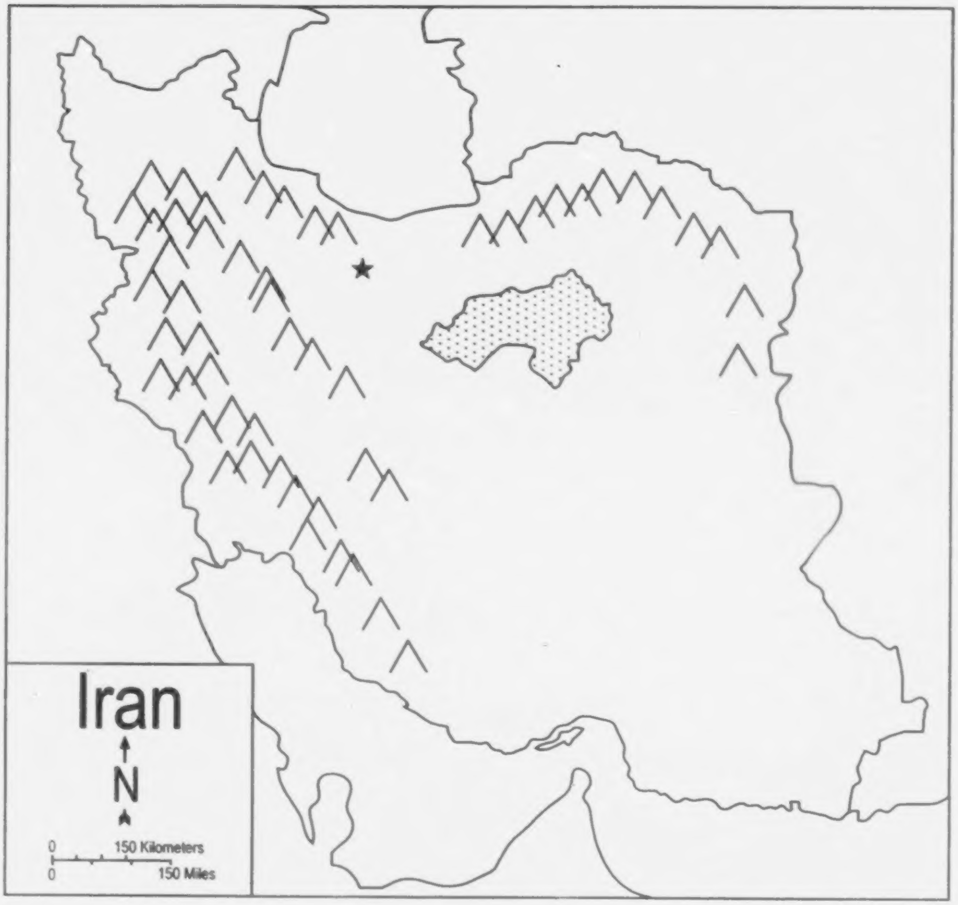
***Geography for Life: National Geography Standards 1994*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS). (Available from NCGE, Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1087, for $7.00 per copy.)

Iran
N
0
150 Kilometers
0
150 Miles

4.5 Iran


Iran
N
0
150 Kilometers
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150 Miles

4.6 Physical Features of Iran

The Learning Activity

Background: Studies of third world migration have generally focused on the results of rural to urban migration by men. A significant migration pattern found across countries in the "developing" world is that of men leaving their villages in search of employment in urban settings. Social scientists began to explain these patterns by looking at human environmental factors such as place-specific unemployment rates or the risk of unemployment, income levels, famine, or war. These factors were often conceptualized as pushing migrants out of the origin or pulling migrants into the new destination. For example, high unemployment rates could push migrants out of a place whereas a perceived low risk of unemployment in a destination may pull migrants there. Research studies also showed that individual level determinants such as marital status, age, or previous migration history were important determinants of migration. For example, single men and women tend to migrate more often and have a higher probability of migration than do married people. Also, those people who have already moved once tend to have a higher probability of moving again than people who are moving for the first time. Additional studies show that the patterns, causes, processes, and consequences of migration vary according to environmental factors like development level or culture and individual factors such as gender. These studies recognize that the causes and consequences of migration may vary across culture and gender.

Introducing the Activity:

Begin the activity by telling the class:

We are going to work on two separate yet related topics—Islamic society in Iran and migration. In order to do that, we need to better understand some concepts related to Islamic culture and migration. Migration patterns can vary according to cultural or regional context. We will begin with Islamic culture and then move on to migration. This introduction may take an entire class period.

Ask the following questions:

Islamic society

- Ask the students to write down their perceptions of Islamic culture in Iran. This will allow the class to identify possible stereotypes and begin the exercise with a baseline of their own cultural knowledge of Islamic society in Iran. You may suggest questions to think about, such as: What do you know about Islamic culture? What is Islam? Where is it practiced? What do some Muslims wear? How are Muslims different from non-Muslims?
- Ask students to identify some of their perceptions and put them on the chalk board.
- When the question of where Islam is practiced arises, note that places in the U.S., such as Detroit, are major centers of Islamic culture.
- When the veil is mentioned, note the historical context of this cultural symbol in Iran and that not all Muslim women of the world wear the veil. The Shah's government banned the veil and then the Islamic Fundamentalist government ruled that all women must wear the veil in public. Explain that if the women in the class went to Iran, they would have to wear the veil.

- Explain several views on the veil
  1.) domination of men and subordination to men
  2.) freedom to interact without sexual overtones

- Explain that not all Muslim women wear a veil (in Indonesia, in many urban areas women do not), but many young women in other Islamic countries are voluntarily wearing the veil to present a cultural symbol and to provide freer interaction in public and work places because cultural norms limit the ability of women to move freely through society.

- The use of the veil is one example of cultural difference and of how cultural difference is interpreted in variable ways across Islamic societies. In some countries the veil is simply a scarf that covers the woman's hair and in other countries the veil covers the woman's entire face leaving only the eyes visible. Use of the veil is generally believed to be connected to Islamic values such as female modesty.

- Other topics that might be discussed in this section are the seclusion of women, women working in the home and not outside of the home, the clear definition of gender roles, family structure and composition (traditionally arranged marriages, married couples live with the parents of the husband), dependence of women on the family and husband, and the strong ties to kin as part of the social network. Also, note that in the case of Iran, the country experienced a revolution and was at war with Iraq during the time period covered by this exercise.

Migration
Ask the students the following questions:

- Did you or your parents move here from another city, state, or country?
  Ask those who respond in the affirmative if they know the reasons why they moved and what the reasons are.
  Ask those who respond in the negative if they know the reasons why they have not moved or why they would not want to move and what the reasons are.
  Write the answers on the chalk board (the affirmative reasons on one side and the negative reasons on the other side).

- Ask students to comment on, analyze, or categorize the reasons. Do the reasons divide into environ mental and individual factors? If so, have the students identify components of the categories.

- Ask the students to think of a place to which they would want to migrate. Ask them to write down two reasons that would push them to migrate, two reasons that would pull them to another location, and two reasons that they would not move. Then ask the students to get into groups of four for about five minutes to compare their lists and discuss why the lists may be similar or different. Do they differ according to gender, race, ethnicity? length of residence at current location? for other reasons?

Executing the Activity:
Start with overheads* of two frameworks for analyzing migration flows (Ravenstein's and Levels of Development). Discuss the overheads by referring back to the students' lists regarding determinants of migration. Also, refer to the distinction between environmental and individual factors of migration.

**These frameworks may be written on the chalk board instead of using overheads.*

Frameworks for Conceptualizing Migration

Ravenstein's Laws of Migration*

- Most migrants move short distances
- Migrants move step by step—first to one location and then another
- Long-distance migrants move to industrial centers
- Each migration stream produces a counter-stream
- Urban dwellers are less likely to move than rural dwellers

**Females move short distances more often than men; men move long distances more often than women*

- Most migrants are adults
- The number of migrants increases as urbanization increases
- Migrants generally move from agricultural areas to industrial areas
- Most causes of migration are economic

**Not all of these laws need be discussed; one could highlight the laws that most directly relate to the Iranian context (e.g., those relating to distance, direction, age, gender).*

Note that Ravenstein developed these laws in the nineteenth century and published them in a journal of the British Statistical Society. They are the result of his observations. Are they specific to a particular time in history (e.g., a time without cars and airplanes)? Are they specific to a particular place (e.g., England versus Iran)? Do they refer to specific levels of development or technology (e.g., the beginning of industrialization)? Might they vary according to culture (e.g., Anglo culture versus Islamic culture)?

Studies show that geographical context and cultural context may influence the determinants of and patterns of migration. For example, in Latin America, women often move as individuals rather than as members of a household. In Islamic countries, cultural factors prohibit women from traveling alone so they generally move as part of a household rather than as individuals.

Migration and Levels of Development

Level of Economic Development	*Type of migration*
Early industrialization	rural-to-urban migration
Industrialization process	rural-to-urban, urban-to-urban appears
Industrialized	urban-to-urban

Note that this conceptualization refers to the direction of migration flows and to the origin of the most mobile population. Discuss with students possible migrant characteristics depending on the level of economic development (e.g., gender, literacy, education, occupation). For example, in some countries more men than women may move during early industrialization and the industrialization process as they change from agricultural to industrial occupations; in other countries (see the essay on Malaysia in this book) women are recruited in large numbers for specific kinds of factory labor. As the level of economic development changes, migrants may become more literate and more educated. In the beginning the less educated move in search of better, low-skilled employment, but as industrialization occurs more educated migrants move between urban places. The educated migrant often moves with a job in place rather than in search of one. Occupations of migrants can also change as the level of economic development increases. For example, in the early industrialization phase, migrant occupations may be low-skilled workers in manufacturing or crafts. By the industrialized phase, migrants may be service sector workers.

You may also want to make an overhead of the map of Iran provided. It will assist the students in locating geographical features, international borders, and city locations that may influence migration patterns. You may note issues such as the agricultural land in Iran is located mostly in the north and the location of Afghanistan and Iraq to Iran (two areas of armed conflict during the time period under study).

Exercise 1: Social and Economic Data Analysis

Part I

Break up the class into four groups. Groups will be assigned one of the following topics to analyze—literacy rates, labor force participation rates, nuptiality rates (marriage rates), and distance traveled by in-migrants. Give each group copies of Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

Part II

After each group has completed the analysis, then regroup into smaller groups of four people with each member representing each of the four topics. Each individual will serve as the group's expert on a topic. Each expert should explain his or her analysis to the group. Then the group members should compare and contrast their findings answering questions such as: How do literacy rates influence migration? How do rates of labor force participation influence migration? How do marriage rates influence migration? How far do migrants travel in Iran? How do the patterns vary spatially (e.g., by urban and rural)? Do the above patterns differ by gender? What is the influence of the patriarchal society? How useful are the conceptualizations of migration for explaining the patterns?

Exercise 2: Migration Mapping

Map 1: Sex ratio of all inter-provincial in-migrants in Iran, 1976-1986
Map 2: Sex ratio of inter-provincial in-migrants aged 20-29 in Iran, 1976-1986
Map 3: Net-migration rate per 1000 population

Part I

Break up the class into three groups. The members of each group will make the same choropleth map. Choropleth maps are maps that use shading (within existing political or regional boundaries) to identify various categories of the data being mapped. The students will help each other identify the regions that belong to the appropriate group and then help each other identify the region on the map to shade. When finished, the group members discuss the spatial patterns and become experts in their topics. The purpose of including two maps of sex-ratios differentiated by age is to show the students that dividing data by age, as well as other factors such as urban or rural location, may change the observed patterns.

Part II
Break up into smaller groups of three with each member of that group being an expert on a different map. Each group member will inform the others of the patterns on the map using the map as a reference. Students will note the differences between maps 1 and 2 and compare those patterns to the general patterns of net-migration. Students should also consider here how distance and environmental factors such as literacy rates, labor force participation rates, nuptiality rates, or political climate may influence the spatial distributions. They should also consider the usefulness of Ravenstein's laws to analyzing these migration patterns. They should also note the difficulty of including in the exercise the influence of individual factors or experience over migration.

Concluding the Activity:
As a class:
- summarize what we learned about migration in Iran
- compare findings to original discussion of migration
- what are the similarities
- what are the differences
- explain similarities and differences

Evaluating the Activity:
The students may hand in the worksheets with the data analysis and the maps. One student may also be appointed to record the main points discussed in the expert discussion sections.

Alternative Strategies:
The teacher may choose to do only the data analysis exercise or the mapping exercise.

Resources

Abedi, Mehdi and Michael M. J. Fischer. 1993. "An Iranian Village Boyhood." In *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, ed. E. B. Burke, III. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Friedl, Erika 1981. "Women and the Division of Labor in an Iranian Village." *Merip Reports (March/April)* 12-31.

Hemmasi, Mohammad 1994. "Gender and Spatial Population Mobility in Iran." *Geoforum*: 213-226 or reprinted with some changes as Chapter 4, in this volume.

Group 1, From Table 4.1: Education and Literacy Rates

Literacy rates are an often-used indicator of level of socio-economic development of a society. They are believed to indicate levels of human welfare. In Iran, literacy has increased over time. Elementary and high school education in Iran is gender-segregated; female attendance at technical colleges and universities has also increased over time. These institutions are located throughout Iran in central cities often distant from villages. Some cultural resistance to the education of women stems from traditional gender roles in the family; this leads to reduced availability of employment for women outside of the home. Traditionally women worked in the home and produced for family use (e.g., food, clothing). Some believe that modern education does not prepare young girls for work inside the home or that education makes the girls hard to control or unwilling to work in the home. We can, however, find successful women throughout Iranian history. Forugh Farrokhzod (1935-1967) was a recognized modern poet, although she did divorce and lose custody of her child in the process. Cultural preference and the lack of available employment have tended to support traditional family roles of women rather than support the education of women for work outside of the home.

1. Look at these data. Looking down the columns will give you an idea of the changes over time. Looking across the rows allows you to compare gender and spatial patterns.

2. Consider the urban literacy rates.
Note how male literacy rates change over time. Explain.
Note how female literacy rates change over time. Explain.
Is there a gap between male and female educational attainment? Explain.
Compare and contrast male and female literacy rates. Explain.

3. Consider the rural literacy rates.
Is there a gap between male and female educational attainment? Explain.
Note how male literacy rates change over time. Explain.
Note how female literacy rates change over time. Explain.
Compare and contrast male and female literacy rates. Explain.

4. Compare and contrast urban and rural literacy rates.
Is there a gap between urban and rural literacy rates for men? for women? how do the gaps change over time? Explain what may influence the creation and or persistence of gaps. What are the effects of the gaps on society in general and migration in particular?

Group 2, From Table 4.2: Labor Force Participation

Labor force participation rates generally indicate economic well-being of the labor force. The more people engaged in formal economic activity, the greater the level of wealth. Labor force participation also is generally considered a good indicator of the status of women. The higher the level of labor force participation of women, the higher the status of women. Women's activity outside of the home is generally constrained in conservative Islamic societies. In fact, after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the government placed restrictions on the employment of women. Urban women are generally employed in teaching, sales, and health related sectors. Rural women are generally employed in agriculture and the carpet and textile industries. In Erika Friedl's research on women in contemporary Iran, she reported that women had difficulty obtaining employment in the Boyer Ahmad region where she lived for a time. She observed that few jobs were available for educated women and many working women had serious family problems that resulted from family attitudes about their work responsibilities outside of the home. She relates the story of an unmarried but betrothed woman who accepted a job outside of her village. The social solution to the *problem* of an unmarried woman moving for employment and living without her family was to have her future mother-in-law accompany her.

1. Look at these data. Looking down the columns will give you an idea of the changes over time. Looking across the rows allows you to compare gender and spatial patterns.

2. Consider the urban labor force participation rates.
Note how male labor force participation rates change over time. Explain.
Note how female labor force participation rates change over time. Explain.
Is there a gap between male and female labor force participation rates? Explain.
Compare and contrast male and female labor force participation rates. Explain.

3. Consider the rural labor force participation rates.
Is there a gap between male and female labor force participation rates? Explain.
Note how male labor force rates change over time. Explain.
Note how female labor force participation rates change over time. Explain.
Compare and contrast male and female labor force participation rates. Explain.

4. Compare and contrast urban and rural labor force participation rates.
Is there a gap between urban and rural labor force participation rates for men? for women? how do the gaps change over time? Explain what may influence the creation or persistence of gaps. What are the effects of the gaps?

5. Consider how labor force participation rates may influence migration decision making of men and women.

Group 3, From Table 4.3: Nuptiality (Marriage)

Marital status is thought to influence one's mobility. In Iran, there are taboos concerning single women traveling. A woman's migration behavior then is tied to the household's or her spouse's migration behavior. In Iranian society, women tend to marry young and generally all women marry. In the 1970s, the Shah's government passed laws aimed at increasing the age at first marriage. The establishment of the Islamic Republic saw the abolition of those laws. Currently, the legal age for first marriage is 15 for girls and 18 for boys. In Iranian Islamic society, marriage and then motherhood give women a certain amount of identity, power and status in the family and in the community denied them otherwise. After marriage, children provide a woman with an occupation because many other traditional pursuits become unnecessary in a modernized village or in urban places. These traditional pursuits include fetching water or planting household gardens.

1. Look at these data. Looking down the columns will give you an idea of the changes over time. Looking across the rows allows you to compare gender and spatial patterns.

2. Compare the patterns for men and women in urban and rural places and for both time periods. Do women marry younger or older than men?

3. Compare the marriage patterns for women in urban places to the patterns for women in rural places. Do urban or rural women marry at younger ages? Explain.

4. Compare the marriage patterns for men in urban places to the patterns for men in rural places. Do urban or rural men marry at younger ages? Explain.

5. Are the above patterns the same for 1976 and 1986? Explain.

Group 4, From Table 4.4: Distance traveled by in-migrants

By comparing place of residence in 1976 with place of residence in 1986 we can infer the distance traveled by migrants. The 1986 Iranian census defines a migrant as a person who changed county or province of residence between 1976 and 1986. Those migrants who moved within the county (intra-county) or within the province (intra-provincial) are considered short or medium distance movers. Those who moved between provinces (inter-provincial) or from another country are considered long distance movers. Migrants may travel short and long distances during their lifetimes. For example, Mehdi Abedi, an Iranian professor in a university in the United States, reached that location by moving from a small village in the province of Yazd to the central city of Yazd for education, then to the city of Qum for further education, and then to the U. S. for education and employment. Abedi is an example of a migrant who moves from a rural to urban location, then becomes an inter-urban migrant, and then becomes a stepwise migrant as he moves to his final international destination.

1. Look at these data. Looking across the rows allows you to compare gender and spatial patterns.

2. According to these data, do more women move short and medium distances than men? Does this differ according to rural or urban location? Explain.

3. According to these data, do more women move long distances than men? Does this differ according to rural or urban location? Explain.

4. Do your findings confirm the Ravenstein's Laws of Migration? Why or why not? Explain.

Group 1, Map 1 from Table 4.5: Sex ratio of migrants, Iran, 1976-1986

Iran, like many other less industrialized countries, has more men than women. The average ratio between men and women (sex ratio) is 105. That means that there are 105 men for every 100 women. A ratio of 90 would mean that there are 90 men for every 100 women. The ratio varies by region. The data to be mapped represents the ratio of long-distance male migrants to long-distance female migrants. The purpose of this map is to illustrate spatial differences of in-migrants by gender.

Make a choropleth map using the data according to the following key and then answer the questions.
Key:

Shade	101 and above (above the average)
Horizontal parallel lines	98 through 100 (average)
Blank	97 and below (below average)

1. Describe the spatial patterns. Are the above average regions located near one another? Are the below average regions located near one another?

2. Using your knowledge of Iranian society and conceptualizations of migration (e.g., Ravenstein's laws and level of economic development), give some explanations for the patterns that you observe.

Group 2, Map 2 from Table 4.5: Sex ratio of inter-provincial migrants aged 20-29, Iran, 1976-1986

Iran, like many other less industrialized countries, has more men than women. The average ratio between men and women (sex ratio) is 105. That means that there are 105 men for every 100 women. This ratio varies by region. The data to be mapped, represents the ratio of long distance male migrants aged 20-29 to long distance female migrants aged 20-29. The purpose of this map is to illustrate spatial differences of in-migrants by gender for one specific age group. The 20-29 age group usually represents a highly mobile segment of the population. Reasons for moving may include marriage, education, or employment. The regions with the lowest ratios of men to women, Mazandran and Gilan are considered socially progressive, whereas the region with the highest ratio, Boyer Ahmad, is considered a traditional region and is predominantly rural.

Make a choropleth map using the data according to the following key and then answer the questions. Key:

Shade	90 and above (above the average)
Horizontal parallel lines	80 through 89 (average)
Blank	79 and below (below average)

1. Describe the spatial patterns. Are the above average regions located near one another? Are the below average regions located near one another?

2. Using your knowledge of Iranian society and conceptualizations of migration (e.g., Ravenstein's laws and level of economic development), give some explanations for the patterns that you observe.

Group 3, Map 3 from Table 4.5: Net-migration rates in Iran, 1976-1986

The net-migration rate measures the difference between the number of in-migrants to a region and the number of out-migrants from a region. It generally is an indicator of social and economic processes occurring in the region. For example, regions that attract large numbers of migrants (a high positive rate) are generally considered socially and economically prosperous. Regions that lose large numbers of migrants (a high negative rate) are generally considered economically or socially distressed. Also, negative rates or net out-migration is often observed during political, social, or environmental distress (e.g., war, revolution, famine, earthquakes).

Make a choropleth map using the following key:

Shade	Rate of 15 or greater
Blank	Rate between 0.0 and 14.99
Horizontal parallel lines	Rate between -0.0 and -19.9
Vertical parallel lines	Rate between -20.0 and -101.0

1. Describe the spatial patterns. Are the above average regions located near one another? Are the below average regions located near one another?

2. Using your knowledge of Iranian society and conceptualizations of migration (e.g., Ravenstein's laws and level of economic development), give some explanations for the patterns that you observe.

5

Gender Relations in Rural Bangladesh: Aspects of Differential Norms about Fertility, Mortality and Health Practices**

K. Maudood Elahi

Introduction

This paper is an outcome of detailed survey research in two rural areas of Bangladesh on "Rural Fertility and Female Economic Activity" undertaken during 1983-4 (Elahi 1987). In this study, a 10 percent sample (of households in the districts of Chandpur and Tangail) was randomly selected for a questionnaire survey. This generated a total of 618 households in two rural areas: Baganbari (300) and Kalihati (318) in the district of Chandpur and Tangail respectively (Figure 5.1). The respondents were the wives and their husbands. The survey was also supported by an anthropological in-depth investigation of selected households thereby providing much of the qualitative data for this study (Elahi 1982).

One of the focuses of the research has been to understand differential norms at individual and community levels regarding fertility, mortality and health, and how they relate to family formation and the activity patterns of women at the household level. In this chapter, the social and related norms about fertility, mortality and health practices have been examined and in doing so, some related aspects have also been reviewed.

General Demographic Profile

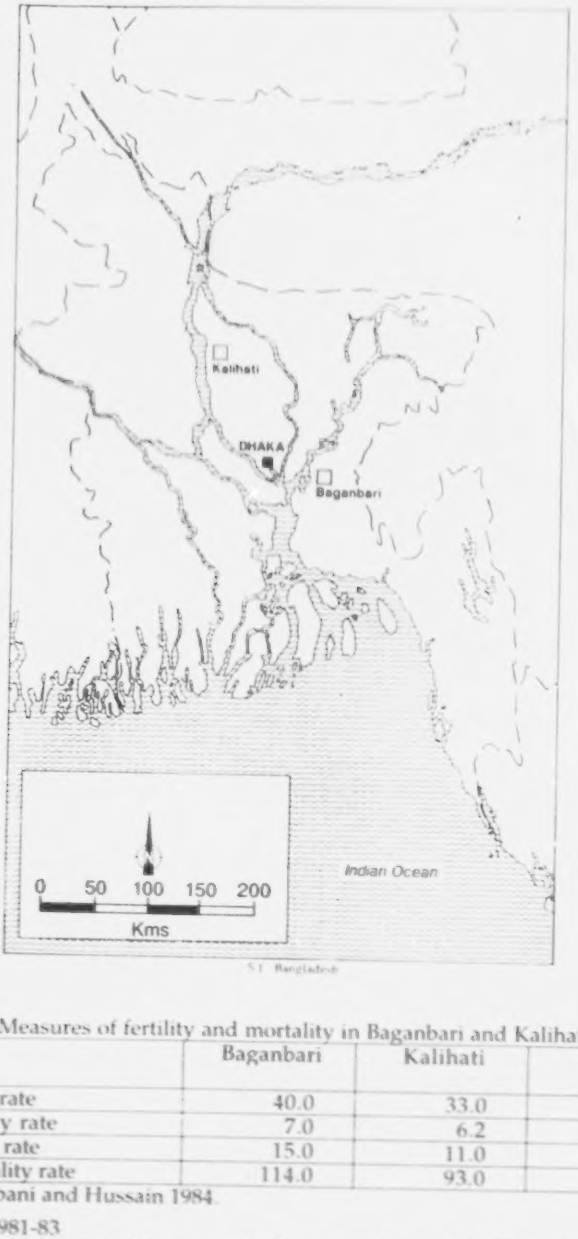
The population of both the study areas is predominantly Muslim: 82 percent and 74 percent in Baganbari and Kalihati, respectively. The Hindus are the significant minority group in both areas but there is no apparent seclusion of settlements by religion in either of the areas under study.

Fertility levels are generally high in Baganbari and Kalihati, although the latter has a fertility rate that is lower than the former and the Bangladesh national average (Table 5.1). The high level of fertility is not only a major cause of women's high death rates generated from maternal mortality but is also an important variable limiting their lives' options with respect to work and status in society.

The level of mortality is also high in both the study areas (Table 5.1). The infant mortality rate (IMR) is lower in Kalihati than in Baganbari, but both areas are below the national average. The lower IMR in Baganbari may be due to the impact of the health and surveillance facilities available at the International Center of Diarrheal Research/ Bangladesh (ICDDRB) field camp based in the area. The causes of death are varied, but diarrhea and gastrointestinal diseases are the most common in both areas and throughout Bangladesh. Table 5.2 provides the five main causes of death, obtained from the survey results. The responses tally closely with the information collected on the prevalence of diseases, which is discussed later. A change in this pattern can only take place with the improvement of interrelated socioeconomic and medico-environmental conditions. On the other hand, as long as the birth rate remains high, there is a limit to mortality reduction. This view particularly applies to the deaths related to child bearing and infant mortality.

Most inhabitants have a rural origin and approximately 95 percent of the inhabitants of both villages were born in their respective villages.

** Originally published as Chapter 7, pp. 80-92 in *Different Places, Different Voices*, eds. Janet Henshall Momsen and Vivian Kinnaird. London and New York: Routledge 1993. Used with permission.



5.1 Bangladesh

Table 5.1 Measures of fertility and mortality in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84

Measure	Baganbari	Kalihati	Bangladesh (rural)a
Crude birth rate	40.0	33.0	36.4
Total fertility rate	7.0	6.2	6.2
Crude death rate	15.0	11.0	13.2
Infant mortality rate	114.0	93.0	120.8

Source: Rabbani and Hussain 1984.

[a] Refers to 1981-83

Table 5.2 Five major reported causes of death in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84

Causes of Death	Percent of women respondents	
	Baganbari	Kalihati
Diarrheal and gastroenteric	40.0	35.0
Cholera	18.0	20.0
Typhoid	12.0	20.0
Childbirth	10.0	15.0
Blood deficiency[a]	20.0	10.0

Source: Author's fieldwork

[a] May be related to other diseases such as fever, respiratory ailments and chronic malnutrition

Health Infrastructure

Health facilities available in the two study areas do not differ greatly from those found elsewhere in Bangladesh. Kalihati is relatively better off in terms of health facilities, since it is near the *upazila*[1] headquarters, thereby enjoying better access to a number of institutional and administrative linkages. Table 5.3 summarizes the health infrastructure in both areas.

During 1983-84, 101 and 128 persons had fallen ill in Baganbari and Kalihati, respectively. The proportional distribution of these persons by duration of illness is shown in Table 5.4. Overall, fever, gastroenteric and diarrheal diseases are the most rampant in both the study areas. The treatment pattern adopted by the households is presented in Table 5.5. It can be observed that a relatively small proportion of the sick was reported to have been treated in government hospitals or the upazila health centers in both Baganbari and Kalihati. Despite the location of the upazila health center within the study area in Kalihati, this center was chosen for treatment by a relatively small proportion of the respondents. Private doctors continue to be the preferred source of treatment of sick persons in Kalihati. In Baganbari, most respondents consulted the paramedics for treatment. A number of other sources of treatment was also adopted in both the areas; however, their proportions were very small. An inquiry was made to understand why people are reluctant to avail themselves to the government sources of treatment where better health facilities are supposed to be available. A wide range of reasons has been indicated for not attending government hospitals and health centers. Of these, "no hospital or medical facility in the locality'" and "difficulty of communication/bad roads," and "lack of good treatment centers are not effective" for Kalihati were frequent answers. Overall, the general impressions of the medical treatment available at the government hospitals or health centers are not good, and this tends to discourage people from attending.

Table 5.3 Health facilities available in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84

	Distance to nearest facility							
	Number		Miles		Travel Time^a		Cost^b	
Health facility	B	K	B	K	B	K	B	K
Government hospital	0	0	10^c	6^d	6	6	20	10
Upazila health center	0	0	10^c	6	6	6	20	10
Dispensary	1	3						
Maternity center	0	0	10	6a	6	6	20	10
Chemist shop (Pharmacy)	4	2						
Private doctor	6	4						
Homeopath doctor	3	6						
Paramedic	2	5						
Trained midwife	0	7	5	1			10	
Untrained midwife	6	6						
Family welfare assistant	2	2						

Source: Author's fieldwork
B—Baganbari
K—Kalihati

[a] Travel time in hours
[b] Cost is in Taka
[c] ICCDRB Hospital in Matlab
[d] Tangal District Hospital

Norms Regarding Marriage and Family Formation

Fertility levels within rural society depend, among other things, on a number of behavioral aspects of which norms about marriage and family formation have a significant bearing. The general characteristics of marital status of the population in the study area indicate that in both Baganbari and Kalihati, the proportions of people who are married are relatively high, as is the proportion of widows. The proportions of divorced and separated people are very low in comparison. Marriage is almost universal in rural Bangladesh. About 49 percent of men and 68 percent of women are married by the time they reach the age of 30 in Baganbari; the figures for Kalihati are 52 percent and 74 percent, respectively. The median age of first marriage is 19 years for males in both Baganbari and Kalihati and 12 years and 14 years for females in Baganbari and Kalihati, respectively.

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[1] A number of upazilas (townships) form a district - which is equivalent to a county in the U.S.

Table 5.4 Disease pattern by duration of illness of affected persons in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 (percent)

	Baganbari				Kalihati			
Disease	a	b	c	Total	a	b	c	Total
Fever	67	64	20	47	64	60	41	52
Diarrhea	20	7	1	9	16	—	2	8
Dysentery	8	14	19	14	5	4	2	3
Pneumonia	2	2	1	2	—	2	1	1
Stomach pain	25	21		10	7	5	8	7
Scabies	—	5	16	8	2	2	12	7
Influenza	—	—	—	—	4	12	8	8
Others				10				14
Total	**31**	**27**	**42**	**100**	**29**	**22**	**50**	**100**

Source: Author's fieldwork

[a] less than 7 days [b] 7 to 15 days [c] 15 or more days

Table 5.5 Adoption of Treatment of Sick Persons in Baganbari and Kalihati 1983-84 (percent)

Source of treatment	Baganbari	Kalihati
Upazila health center	0.7	0.9
Chemist shop/pharmacy	4.2	11.9
Private doctor	9.5	47.7
Homeopath doctor	1.4	6.1
Paramedic	72.3	0.5
Trained dai	—	1.0
Others	5.0	5.8
Total[a]	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's fieldwork

[a] Some totals are rounded

Marriage is a vital social event when women change from the status of daughter to daughter-in-law, and subsequently, most significantly, to that of mother. It also changes the role of a male family member from that of boy, with shared responsibility in the family to an adult with increased status. But the transformation for men, who usually continue to live in their original place of residence, is gradual; for women, the change is sudden as they move into a new social and spatial environment.

In the study areas, it is held that "marriage is important to keep on family lineage"—the *bangsa*. For the Hindus, the objectives of marriage are three-fold: religion (*dharma*), progeny (*prajan*) and pleasure (*rati*). It is believed by some Muslims and Hindus alike that the pairing of marital partners is spiritually predetermined. But, there are others who do not believe in such predetermination. Nevertheless, such a belief, undoubtedly symbolizes the importance of marriage and inhibits marriage dissolution. For both Muslims and Hindus, marriage is also a religious function coupled with social and/or legal rituals. Strictly speaking, a Hindu marriage is a sacrament, while Muslim marriage is a contract under religious sanction.

Age of Marriage

Most respondents believe that boys and girls should get married at the age of 25 and 18, respectively. "It is good for health to marry at the right time" is a common statement. However, belief and practice differ considerably. The median age of first marriage is low in both Baganbari and Kalihati and it is generally perceived that "if the girl is not married in time (soon after puberty), her youth will be spoiled" and that "people will speak ill of girls kept unmarried long in the family."

Reaction to raising the age of marriage for girls by three years was investigated. Most women were unsure of the results or impact that would ensue. Between 24 and 36 percent of women in the study areas indicated that such a change would be beneficial. The reasons are varied, yet significant, indicating a far-reaching impact if this kind of change was implemented. (Tables 5.6 and 5.7). A good proportion of respondents in both Baganbari and Kalihati felt that raising the age of marriage by three years would allow girls to gain experience in family formation and housework, which indicates the importance of family and household well-being in rural social structure.

Table 5.6 Reaction to Increasing the Age of Marriage of Girls by 3 Years in Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84 (percent of female respondents)

Reaction	Baganbari	Kalihati
Unsure of ramifications	37	35
Good	31	32
Bad	16	21
No difference	16	12

Source: Author's fieldwork

Table 5.7 Reasons for Favoring an Increase in Age of Marriage for Girls, Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84

Reason	Baganbari	Kalihati
Help with child raising	24	22
Gain experience in family formation	22	21
Time to learn household tasks	21	19
Help raise the family income	6	15
Time for schooling	9	12
Allow time to know husband	4	6
Help maintain good health	4	3
Beneficial for health and childbearing	—	1
Total[a]	100	100

Source: Author's fieldwork

[a] Some totals are rounded

Those who think negatively of raising the age of marriage for girls provided a wide range of reasons. Most were concerned with the attitude of neighbors and the community in general. Some, mostly those in lower land-holding categories, thought it sinful to keep eligible, unmarried girls at home (Table 5.8). These social prejudies are related to the degree of *purdah*[2] observed in the rural areas and are quite consistent with the rural social structure of the country.

It may also be noted that the proportional differences with respect to responses are not substantiated by region, but by land ownership categorization. Some of the women on medium and large farms indicated reasons that have lesser importance than similar reasons do for the small-holding groups (Elahi 1987).

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[2] Purdah is a term used for the practice of secluding females from being viewed by men among both Hindu and Muslim communities in South Asia. The degree of seclusion ranges in degree from as little as wearing a head scarf in public to being wholly restricted to the family compound where curtains or walls separate the female quarters. This practice varies greatly from one community to another.

Table 5.8 Reasons for Not Favoring an Increase in Age of Marriage for Girls, Baganbari and Kalihati, 1983-84

Reason	Baganbari	Kalihati
Other people's negative perception	31	36
Adult girls are prone to misguidance	9	17
Not good to leave girls unmarried	15	9
Adult girls are a burden on their families	14	9
It's a sin to keep girls unmarried	3	7
Girls adjust better to in-law house if married early	4	5
Delay of marriage of one daughter may lead to delay for others	9	3
Fear of bad reputation	7	7
Other reasons	8	8
Total[a]	100	100

Source: Author's fieldwork

[a] Some totals are rounded

According to the Bangladesh Fertility Survey (BFS) data, the age of marriage of women has been rising noticeably, although its effect on fertility is minimal. The mean age of marriage for women in 1927 was 10.9 years; by 1957 this had risen to 13.3 years (13.9 years in urban areas). It is estimated that the age of marriage rose by 2.7 years between 1962 and 1975. These findings are consistent with the range of responses regarding mean age of marriage as discussed above, and also with the information on marriage in the study areas.

Marriages for girls in rural areas are arranged by their father and other male relatives or elders. Since Islamic law sees marriage as a contract, its dissolution is possible, and in that event, financial security is ensured for the wives through *moharana*—a fixed sum of money, part of which is payable to the bride on demand and the rest payable after dissolution of the marriage. Among the households of the small landholders, the male guardians of the woman regard moharana as a price and often demand part of it. Among medium and large farm households, it is considered to be more prestigious not to claim the moharana and the actual payment is rarely made (Elahi 1987).

In contrast to the religious sanction regarding moharana, there is a widespread custom of dowry (money, livestock, farm equipment, ornaments, luxury items) which is given to the bridegroom at the time of the wedding. The amount of dowry fixed by the guardians of the bridegroom and there are incidents of broken engagements due to a failure to meet the dowry payment. In the study areas, the value of a dowry ranged from Tk2,000.00 (takas[3]) for the landless households to Tk50,000 or more for those in the large land holding category. It is held that "it costs money to raise a son" and "my son is competent both socially and economically—one has to pay for them." Despite its widespread practice (especially among Hindu families), requesting a dowry is against the law; however, most cases go unreported. It is also difficult to assess the extent of marriage dissolution as a result of non-payment of dowry. Since most marriages are not registered, there exists a wide gap between what is laid down in law and what is practiced. Further, most women are ignorant of the laws anyway. For example, in the case of divorce, the legal sanctions protecting women's interests are rarely upheld.

The practice of polygamy is looked down upon in the study areas, both socially and economically. In both Baganbari and Kalihati, the proportion of polygamous marriage was found to be very low (1.2 percent).

Patterns of Mortality and Health

During 1983-4, 136 males and 93 females were reported ill in the study households. However, it seems that illness among females is underestimated and under-reported to some extent. In general, young children and older adults have a higher proportion of illness is associated with child birth, especially during the late reproductive age period.

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[3] Bangladesh's unit of currency. Within the last five years the value of a taka in U.S. dollars ranged from US$1=40-50 takas. The dowry might be equivalent to 500 to 1,000 U.S. dollars.

Decisions regarding treatment of ill people are crucial and reflect the level of patriarchal dominance prevailing in the rural society. Almost as a rule, the decision regarding treatment is taken by men. They account for over 54 percent of all decision making regarding the treatment of the sick. Most of the sick were treated by a private doctor in Kalihati, and by a paramedic in Baganbari. The proportions of those who sought treatment in government health centers/hospitals were low (see Table 5.3). The underlying proposition of seeking treatment has always been the impact of decisions taken at the household level and whether the patient is male or female. It is evident that males get better medical attention than their female counterparts, which is partially explained by differential perceptions of sickness and mortality among boys and girls.

Differential Mortality: Perception of Wives and Husbands

The respondents were asked about their perception of mortality among boys and girls. Reasons for differential perceptions reflect beliefs about health, food, nutrition, and the availability of facilities. Those who think that infant and child mortality is increasing, blame inadequate health infrastructure followed by insufficient medicines and doctors. In contrast, those believing that child and infant mortality is declining have indicated the opposite: that there are improved health facilities and availability of treatment. Those responding with neutral answers continue to suffer the same problems as in the past, such as insufficient food, and have no personal experience to suggest that the child and infant mortality rate is changing.

In-depth interviews revealed that most people are apathetic towards government medical and health facilities at the local level. It is also generally believed that "one cannot expect good treatment in the upazila health centers," that "they give not good medicines" and that "doctors demand money for treatment which should be free." The members of most medium and large land-holding farm households usually attend private clinics in nearby towns: "at least you get good medicines from the private doctors" (see Elahi 1987).

Perception of sex differentials in infant and child mortality reveals certain significant facts. In a patriarchal social set up, where male children are valued most and where it is recognized that they are biologically weaker in infancy, the responses reflected an obvious parental concern regarding the survival of male children. Most respondents, particularly wives, thought that boys are more likely to die before they reach adulthood. Those who thought that girls are more prone to sickness and death in infancy suggested that girls are disease prone and of weaker constitutions (32 to 45 percent) and suffer from a lack of care and medical treatment. On the other hand, those who held that boys die most blamed high mortality and disease proneness among boys. These reasons, however, are less realistic since boys are valued more than girls in rural society and extreme care is taken of them in infancy. Women, in particular, are found to regard sons as the prime sources of old-age support. Further, despite the responses that support a lack of discrimination in mortality of boys and girls, information and records from the upazila health centers and government dispensaries in the study areas indicate that boys were given medical attention at an earlier stage of sickness than the girls. A higher proportion of male children were brought for treatment than the girls in these centers. The trend is more prevalent in the households of small land owners and in those having more than one girl in the family. The perceptions expressed as to the mortality of boys reflect the familial and social concern about the possible survival of the male children and perhaps overshadow the respondents' true feelings about child and infant mortality. On the other hand, some respondents indicated that, "Yes, people neglect daughters' treatment when they are sick" and "daughters are not taken care of well if they are too many." Such attitudes are reflected in the perceptions of child mortality in both areas and are found to be similar in other areas of South Asia (see Khan *et al.* 1985).

Health Norms

Related to the condition of mortality is a number of practices observed by rural women and men in birth delivery and illness. These norms directly affect mortality levels and indirectly affect a range of phenomena which influence human activities.

Birth Delivery Practices

In most households, the delivery of babies is assisted by the relatives of the mother, followed by *dai* (traditional birth attendants). A small proportion of women reported having had a trained nurse/dai and doctor to assist in the birth. But cases of unattended births or births attended solely by a female elder in the family are not rare. Those who depend on doctors and trained dai for delivery are mostly members of the large land holding groups. In other cases, apart from unskilled dai, older women, who are either relatives or neighbors, played an important role. Since the majority of local doctors are male, it is unusual for them to be called in to the birth unless there is some complication. Otherwise, local dai and relatives or older relatives are relied upon.

As has been seen earlier, the extent of generally negative attitudes regarding government health facilities and the alleged demand for money by the health personnel discourage many from seeking to deliver their babies at these facilities. The local dai, who have been visiting the mother during her pregnancy, ask for less money for assisting in the delivery. Very often they are paid in both cash and kind, the latter usually comprising one or two saris and some rice. The total value paid for assisting in the birth ranges from Tk80.00 to Tk300.00. If the baby is a boy, the remuneration may increase to Tk500.00. Thus, not only is there a general skepticism of the local government-run health facilities, but on economic grounds, most families prefer the services of a local dai.

Women prefer their babies to be delivered at home, but have a preference for their parents' home in delivering the first born. Mothers also insist on bringing their pregnant daughters home for the first birth in order to ensure adequate care for both the daughter and infant. If there is a shortage of space, as in the case of the landless or small landholders, the living room is divided with a makeshift partition. Among the Hindus, it is common to erect a purpose-built shed which is dismantled and burned afterwards.

Pre- and post-natal care for women is scant at the formal level. Most women from small land holding households do not engage in courses organized by the government health units. Some of the educated and well-to-do women visit the government hospitals or private doctors at least two to three times in order to seek advice relating to pregnancy and child care. In most cases, the main sources of such advice are the elder family members, i.e., mother, mother-in-law, and elder sister or sister-in-law.

Illness and Health-Care Practices

It was also one of the objectives of this study to look into the extent of differential health-care and feeding practices for selected life stages of males and females in the study areas. There are no apparent differences between male and female children in breast feeding and administering liquid foods (cow's or goat's milk, barley, and rice water). However, there is evidence to suggest that discrimination does occur once children begin taking solid food. In the study area, children are introduced to solid food between the ages of 6 and 10 months starting with mashed rice with fish or egg or vegetables. A male child gets one egg almost every day if the parents can afford it; this is not offered to a baby girl. The discrimination is more visible at the ages of 3 or 4 years. The male children eat with adult males while female children eat with mother and other female household members, all of whom tend to eat what food is left after the men finish their meals. It is held, particularly in the rural areas, that "men need more food—they do heavy work and work in the fields." In some respects this may be true, but is certainly a false assumption to make of the nutritional requirements of boys and girls at a very young age.

In general, parents prefer their children to be treated by a local homeopath doctor as they believe the homeopathic medicines are more suitable for babies. However, here too a significant discrimination against female children can be observed. Overall, a girl receives appropriate medical attention if she is the only child or only daughter among many sons. Otherwise, at the initial stage of illness, she is ignored and her illness is rationalized as either being trivial or a characteristic of her general level of health. It was also observed that many mothers wanted to give appropriate medical attention to their daughters but that their economic situation (as in landlessness), their low status in the household (as a daughter-in-law), having too many female children or being ignorant of the medical facilities available, all act as hindrances to proper decision making. Often, different sex differentials prevail due to the mechanisms in force regarding family-level decision making which is predominantly made by male members of the household, most often the husband. In a way, the overall mortality and health situation discussed above is related to the total social and economic value of male children in the rural areas. This aspect, as has been observed in rural areas, greatly affects the preference for family formation in terms of desire for male children by the respondents.

Conclusion

The study reveals that sex discrimination in favor of males operates at an early stage and is manifested in the norms of family formation, birth delivery, illness, and health practices. This pattern continues throughout the lives of both sexes and negatively affects women. The relevant norms are deep rooted enough to influence perceptions about the degree of usefulness of male and female children in the society, and abo family formation, old-age support, economic usefulness of children and differential mortality rates. There is a great deal of difference in gender discrimination on these counts according to the developmental level of each of the two study areas.

The level of fertility is influenced substantially by a number of behavioral conditions of which norms about marriage, age at marriage, old-age support and economic usefulness of children (mainly male children) and family formation have a significant bearing on rural society.

The proportion of persons falling ill and seeking treatment are biased towards males in both study areas. It seems that sickness among females is underreported and underestimated to some extent. The decision taken regarding treatment of the ill is crucial for a number reasons and reflects the level of patriarchal dominance prevailing in Bangladeshi rural society. Almost as a rule, decisions regarding medical attention are taken by the husbands or fathers who are usually the household heads and chief earners of household income. Whatever the range of medical facilities available, access to treatment has always been affected by the decision that has been adopted at the household level and whether the patient is a male or a female household member. In the case of illness, males tend to get better attention, which reflects the differential perception regarding sickness and mortality in male and female children.

It has been observed that traditionalism affecting the status of women and the recognition of their activities both within the family and at the community level is deep rooted and influences the socioeconomic norms and value systems influencing men. These, in turn, significantly affect the fertility, mortality and health norms in rural Bangladesh.

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Learning Activity

Living Without: Women's Access to Health and Educational Resources in Bangladesh

Munira Ismail

Introduction:
The United Nations General Assembly of 1967 endorsed the basic tenet that men and women should be given the same rights, obligations and work assignments. This, in effect, supported the principle of equality among the sexes. The road towards achieving gender equality has, however, been tenuous in most societies. This role-playing activity will introduce the students to the gender tensions that pervade many societies. It is an attempt to foster a heightened awareness among students of the many factors that underlie this issue.

Grade Level: 10-12

Time Required: 2-3 class periods and homework

Standards Implemented*: The geographically informed person knows and understands
4.1: The meaning and significance of place.
13.3: How differing points of view and self-interests play a role in conflict over territory and resources.

Skills: This learning activity requires the student to:
- Engage in problem solving
- Analyze culturally specific issues
- Analyze gender issues
- Acquire geographic and cultural information

Geographic Vocabulary or Concepts: Gender, Gender-segregation, Islam/Muslim

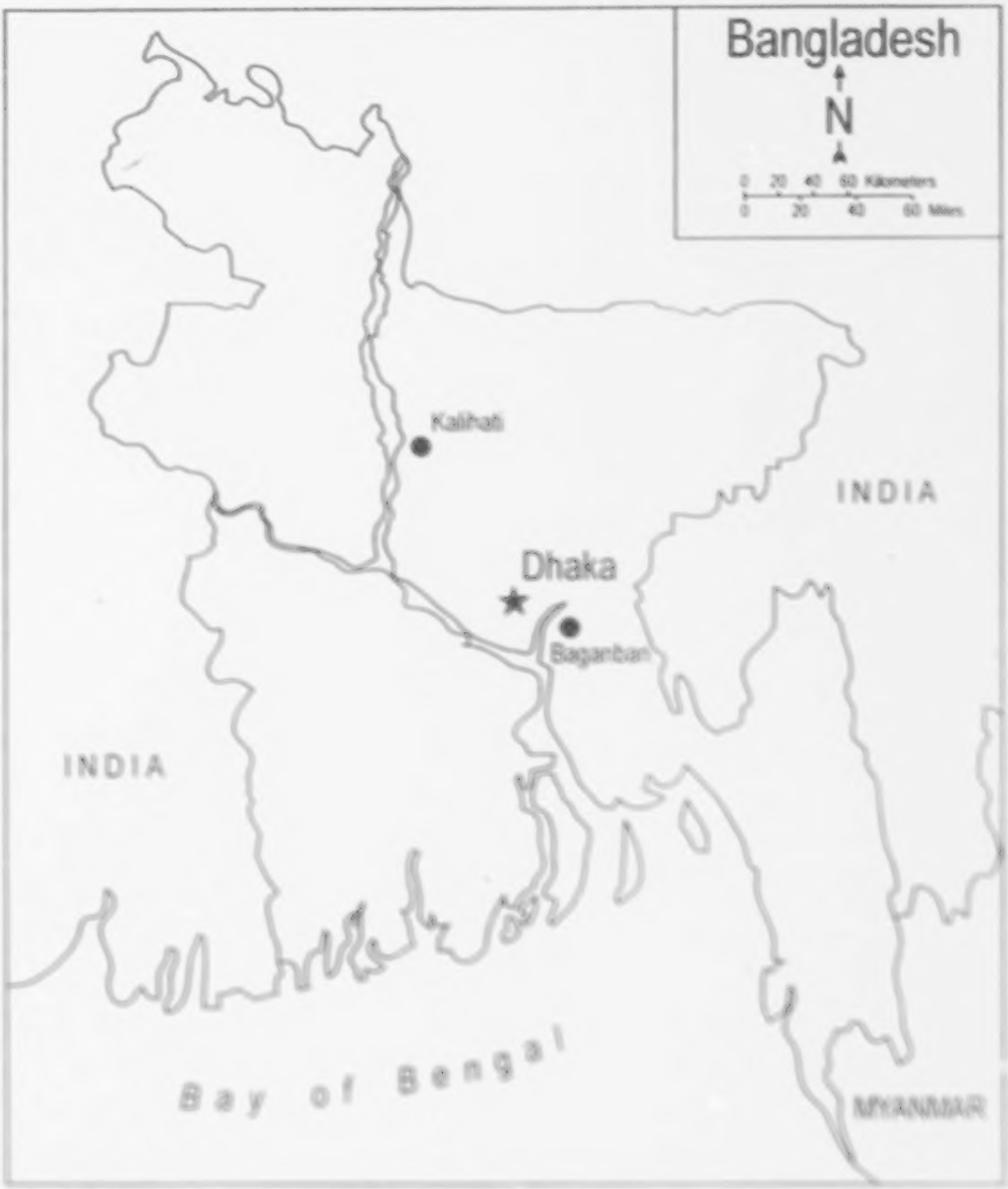
Objectives: As a result of the learning activity the student will:
- Develop a greater understanding of the issue of gender inequality.
- Develop an understanding of the geographic concept of spatial diversity and culture specificity, and how gender discrimination affects access to social resources.

Materials: Large wall map of Bangladesh or South Asia, outline maps of Bangladesh (Figures 5.2 and 5.3), copies of the role-playing scenarios.

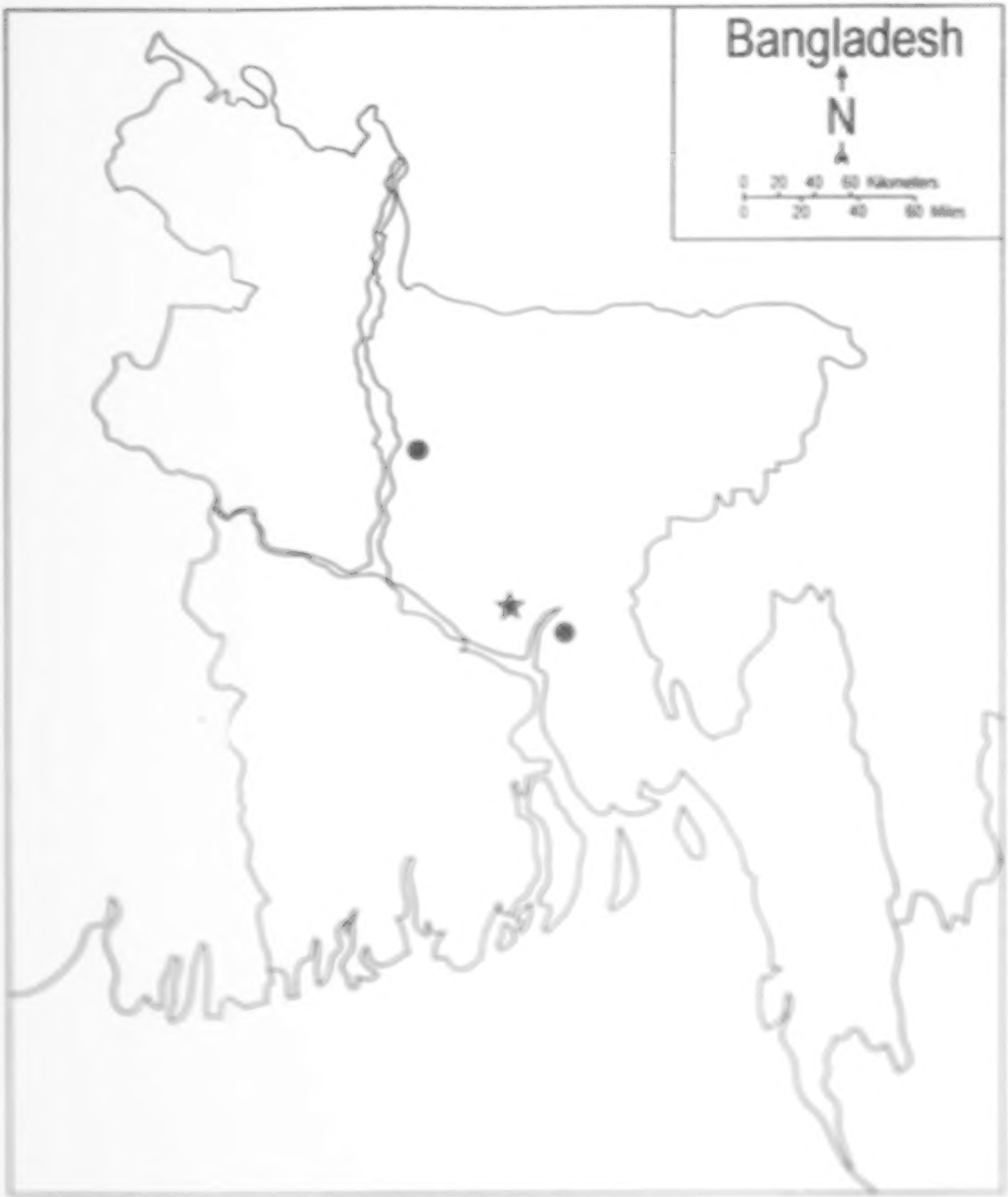
The Learning Activity

Background: With the conclusion of the fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the long standing activism on the part of many people worldwide, attention has been focused on the issue of the unequal status of women in most parts of the world. This issue must, however, be considered within the culturally specific norms of behavior relative to the region being addressed. Gender, which refers to the socially defined roles of males and females in a society, differs from one culture to another. Ideals of gendered behavior that are developed in one culture may be entirely inappropriate in another. We must, therefore, exercise caution when we try to interpret gender relations in different cultures. This exercise will focus on the gendered social issues and dilemmas that commonly confront some societies in order to provide a practical insight into the situation in Bangladesh.

**Geography for Life: National Geography Standards 1994*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the *American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS)*. (Available from NCGE, Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1087, for $7.00 per copy.)


Bangladesh
N
0 20 40 60 Kilometers
0 20 40 60 Miles
Kalihati
INDIA
Dhaka
Baganbari
INDIA
Bay of Bengal
MYANMAR

5.2 Bangladesh with Selected Place Names


Bangladesh
N
0 20 40 60 Kilometers
0 20 40 60 Miles

5.3 Outline Map of Bangladesh

Introducing the activity:

Begin the activity by introducing the key terms indicated above and by introducing the country of Bangladesh with a short map exercise. Bring in a large map of South Asia or Bangladesh and its surrounding areas. Supplement this map with a transparency made from the outline map in the book. Provide each student with a photocopy of the outline map from the book. Using the maps introduces the class to the geographic location of Bangladesh in relation to its neighbors, climate, economic situation, and society using both the wall map and the transparency for detailed map locations in Bangladesh.

At the very least the class should be able to identify and locate the capital city, Dhaka, the port city of Chittagong, the two major rivers, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, and their deltas and the Bay of Bengal. While identifying these locations, explain the significance of these locations by referring to the notes provided.

At the end of the class period, test the students with a short map location quiz.
(Instructor: refer to attached introductory notes on Bangladesh)

Instructor's Reference Notes on Bangladesh
History
During the time of India's independence from British colonialism in 1947, and the consequent partitioning of India into Hindu-dominated India and Muslim-dominated Pakistan, what today is known as Bangladesh was politically joined to Pakistan and called East Pakistan. These two provinces of East and West Pakistan were not only separated from one another by thousands of miles of India but were culturally and ethnically very different as well. The only commonality was that they both had a majority of people who followed the religious teachings of Islam. Geographic distance from one another, unequal allocation of national resources and cultural differences led to a demand for independence that resulted in the war of independence in 1971. East Pakistan fought and won its independence from the administration of West Pakistan and became the independent nation of Bangladesh.

Physical Geography
Bangladesh is surrounded by India and Myanmar (Burma) and the Bay of Bengal. It is 55,598 square miles (144,000 sq km or about the size of Wisconsin) and is inhabited by more than 122 million people (1995 estimate). Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerably located countries in the world. During this century, eight of the world's ten costliest flooding disasters in terms of loss of human life have struck this country. Its precarious geographic location can spell only more disaster in the centuries to come. Bangladesh lies at the foot of the massive dual deltas of the Brahmaputra and Ganges rivers. It is thus barely above sea level. The deltaic alluvial soil is rich in nutrients and is intensely cultivated with rice, the staple crop. The warm humid environment over the Bay of Bengal often plays host to the formation of cyclones (hurricanes) that move north cutting a path right through Bangladesh. Severe flooding not only ruins the intensely cultivated delta but kills thousands of people and animals who live on the delta. The economic and social costs are enormous.

Economy
A low Gross National Product (GNP) of just US$200 per capita, and based largely on a subsistence farming system, renders Bangladesh one of the poorest and least economically developed countries in the world. Agricultural activity provides more than two thirds of the GNP and constitutes more than 75 percent of the labor force. The major problems that limit Bangladesh's development are natural disasters, fragmentation of land holdings and the subsistence nature of most production. Rice is the most important crop followed by jute, oil seed, cane sugar, and wheat.

Socio-economic
Labor involvement in rice production is traditionally divided according to sex and therefore gendered. Bangladesh is predominately Muslim in cultural and religious values, which influences women's access to public spaces. A woman does not leave the confines of her bari or homestead for work. Unlike other Asian societies where the women are engaged in planting, transplanting, and weeding processes of rice production, Bangladeshi women are involved only in post-harvest production that takes place within the confines of their homestead. The men provide labor, production, and harvesting grain crops. The women provide all of the labor for the post-harvest activities and thresh, winnow, and process the grain for

consumption. This division of labor unfortunately makes invisible, to those outside the homestead, the work performed by the women. This situation has often led to the national and international misconception that women are not economically productive. This is far from the truth because female labor contributes more than 45 percent of the value added in rice production in Bangladesh.

The two most important factors that can change the status quo for both men and women in agriculture and their gendered, or socially constructed, roles in society are technology and migration. Around most parts of the world, when technology is applied to jobs that women traditionally perform, men take over the operation of the machinery and women lose their jobs as well as their status in society leading to displacement and devaluation of their labor.

When land fragmentation makes it economically unprofitable for farmers to farm, males are pushed out of rural areas and migrate into urban centers in search of work. In such instances, women are either displaced and left with no support or are forced to tend to the land left behind. These changes force alterations in long-held gender roles of behavior and bring change to society.

- Having introduced the class to the country ask them to read Handout #1, based on Elahi, K. Maudood, "Gender Relations in Rural Bangladesh," Chapter 5 in this publication. Allow five minutes to read the material.

Executing the Activity:

Introduce the group to the following scenario:

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh wants to improve the quality of medical care rural women receive in Bangladesh. It has been proposed that the key to achieving this goal is in the establishment of rural medical training centers that will train women as *primary health providers* who will in turn will treat patients in the villages. As noted in handout #1, males are often favored over females in receiving medical treatment mainly because males most often make the decision to treat the sick. Illness among females is often downplayed and underreported, therefore educating the community on issues of health will also be a responsibility the health providers. It is proposed that the medical centers will actively seek young rural women from the village for training as primary care health providers. Recruitment will be based on a preliminary oral examination to determine eligibility. The recruits will receive all the training and education at the training center. Medical training will concentrate on childbirth, post and prenatal care, nutrition, treatment of basic diseases, and first aid. Unmarried women will serve in their home communities and nearby villages and married women will serve in their husbands' villages. The village of Kalihati has been chosen as a test site for a medical training center. Although many villagers bemoan the lack of medical facilities, the village is divided in its opinion in supporting the training center. Many fear the possibility of change.

a. Ask the class to think of possible reactions to this proposal from specific groups of people within the village. Allow time for the students to think this over. Who do they feel will agree or disagree with the program? Ask them to identify the parties and think about the reasons that may influence them to favor the proposal or oppose it.
b. Divide the class into three groups. Distribute to each group copies of one of the scenarios on a 3 X 5 card. Note: Each group should have both male and female representatives, if possible.
c. Instruct each group to discuss the issue of the proposed medical training center and write down a list of reasons why they approve or disapprove of the medical centers. Allow time for the students to write and discuss their opinions among themselves. Each group must come to a consensus if the training center should or should not be built. Each group should select one spokesperson to share the group's opinions with the rest of the class later.

Group #1: Scenario #1.
The members of the first group are to play the role of young Bangladeshi women who are striving to change traditional roles and take more control of their lives. Hand out scenario #1 and instruct the group to read the scenario and try to understand the situation from the perspective of the group identified in the scenario.

Group #2: Scenario #2.
The second group comprises older, married Bangladeshi women who do not particularly enjoy their status under the authority of men, but still feel satisfied with the status quo. They feel that change will only disrupt the existing equilibrium. Hand out scenario #2 and instruct the group to read the scenario and try to understand the situation from the perspective of the group identified.

Group #3: Scenario #3.
The third group is comprised of men who cannot see why women should be educated or trained in anything besides cooking, sewing, and cleaning since their duties lie in the home. They feel that a woman's job is at home, either as a dutiful daughter getting prepared for marriage, a faithful wife who looks after and obeys her husband, and a loving mother who nurtures her children. Hand out scenario #3 and instruct the group to read the scenario and try to understand the situation from the perspective of this group.

Concluding the Activity:

When each group has discussed the issue and has arrived at a consensus, instruct each group's representative to stand up and present the views of the group. They must defend their stance on the issue. Do they agree with the notion that training and educating women will transform the gender discrimination that occurs within the rural society of Bangladesh? Will female health providers lead to better health care among women and reduce the high rates of infant mortality? Is there a need to improve the status of women? What are these reasons? Will the medical centers bring about changes in the villages, if so, what may they be? Will these changes unduly disrupt rural life in Bangladesh? Once the representative has presented the group's stance on the issue, allow members of the other groups to question the opinions expressed. Allow any member of the presenting group to defend his or her opinion. Moderate the presentations for time.

Once the three representatives have presented their views, ask each individual to write a short personal report on whether the medical training center should or should not be built. They must justify their stance with a reasonable argument. Each student should not write this report from the point of view of the role playing. It is an individual opinion expressed by the student.

Evaluating the Activity:

Evaluate students on the basis of their group presentation and individual reports. Place a greater weight on the individual written reports. Evaluate the work on the bases of logical argument, an insightful understanding into the situation, and practical solutions to the problems posed.

Alternative Strategy:

Organize students into two teams. Give them a week to investigate the issues revolving around the following statement: "Equal education is the key to gender equality in Bangladesh" with one team opposing and the other supporting the statement. At the end of the week, get the two teams to debate the issue in a format of five speakers each with an opening statement and a closing argument for each team.

Resources

Elahi, M. 1993, "Gender Relations in Rural Bangladesh." In *Different Places, Different Voices.* eds. J. Momsen and V. Kinnaird. London: Routledge.

De Blij, Harm J. and Peter Muller 1994. *Geography: Realms, Regions and Concepts*, 7th ed. New York: John Wiley: 496-498.

Moser, C. O. N. 1993. *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*. London: Routledge.

White, Sarah C. 1992. *Arguing with the Crocodile*. London: Zed Books.

Handout #1

A recent study conducted in two villages in Bangladesh by K. M. Elahi, a Professor of Geography at the Jehangirnagar University in Dhaka, Bangladesh revealed the following:

Sex discrimination in favor of males begins at an early stage and shows itself in the norms of family formation, birth, delivery, and health practices. This pattern continues throughout adult life with women often being neglected in favor of males. These discriminatory practices are deeply rooted and influence perceptions about family formation, old-age support, and the usefulness of male and female children.

Marriage is the most significant event in a girl's life. It changes her status from that of a daughter to a daughter-in-law and, more importantly, a mother. Because women live in their husband's homes after marriage, their decline in status from daughter to daughter-in-law further handicaps their ability to assert themselves. For both Hindus and Muslims marriage is essential to keep the family lineage and is sanctioned by both religions. Since Islam sees marriage as a contract, dissolution is possible. In such a case the financial security of the wife is determined by paying a fixed sum of money to the bride on demand. Marriages among both Hindus and Muslims are arranged by male guardians.

The fertility rate in Bangladesh is high, therefore reproduction is a primary objective in marriage. In most cases female relatives deliver the babies. It is rare to call a doctor since they are mostly male, and it is inappropriate for women to interact with a man who is not a member of one's family. High levels of fertility and women's limited access to doctors in the two villages of Baganbari and Kalihati are a major cause of death for child-bearing women. It is also an important variable that limits women from working outside the home and gaining higher economic and social status. In 1993-94 the most common illnesses were fever, gastroenteric, and diarrheal diseases. The preferred form of treatment was a private doctor. A widespread mistrust of government-run hospitals prevailed. Gender differences in medical treatment are also marked. As a rule, male members of the family who are heads of households and chief earners make the decisions on whether to seek medical attention. It seems that female sicknesses are often viewed by the men as simple complaining, with the result that male adults and children get better medical care whereas illness among women and girls is underestimated and underreported.

Male control over social resources, such as health care and the traditions of society in these two villages negatively affect the status of women. These deep-rooted perceptions influence the social and economic systems of these villages with the women being subject to a lower status that defines them primarily as reproductive agents.

Scenario 1

You are a group of young Bangladeshi women. Some of you are not married or about to be whereas others are married with 2 to 3 children.

Your husbands, fathers, and brothers are all farmers and you have never been to work outside of your home.

You live in either your husband's or father's house and help to cook meals for the whole family, clean the house, and feed and look after the children.

You have no money of your own, but you meet most of your needs by conveying your desires to either your husband or mother (who gets it from your father).

Because going to the hospital requires an escort and money, you have never been to one. Your daughters and sisters also are very rarely taken to one. Your sons and brothers are, however, attended to immediately since they are perceived to be the future breadwinners of the family and thus need to be healthy.

You are a group of women who want to change this situation. You have heard that women in the city go out to work and even live by themselves! The Prime Minister of your country has been a woman! You want your daughters to go to school and become teachers, doctors, and engineers.

You see the training center as an ideal opportunity to develop skills besides cooking, as well as an ideal way to encourage your daughters to strive for a more independent way of life. Education is surely the way to independence away from the patronage of men.

- Should the training center be built?
- Why is it important that the women of the village be trained in health care?
- Would the use of female health providers lead to better health care among women?
- Is there a need to improve the status of women in rural Bangladesh? Will this proposal help?
- How would this benefit the village? Will these changes unduly disrupt rural life in Bangladesh?

Scenario 2

You are a group of middle aged women who have seen it all. You have been through the ordeal of having to relocate to your husband's home upon marriage, you have endured the insults and demands made by your mothers-in-law, husbands, their brothers and children. You are now the head of your own house and allocate work to your daughters-in-law much the same way as had been done for centuries.

Your daughters-in-law do all the work around the house. These young women are, however, less obedient than women of the old days. When you were younger you knew that your place was in the home looking after the needs of your husband and family. You are increasingly concerned by all this talk of young women being trained to work outside the home as doctors and nurses. You fear that this will lead to young women abandoning their families and postponing marriage! You are certain that it will result in a breakdown of the traditions and customs of Bangladeshi culture and cause moral decay in society!

If the training center is located near your village, then it could result in the young women of the village being trained in medical skills, and what use is a medically trained woman to a hardworking young farmer like your son? Educated women are never happy and are always complaining, arguing, and disobeying. You think that an educated woman is not an asset. She is a liability.

- Should the training center be built?
- Why is it important that the women of the village be trained in health care?
- Would the use of female health providers lead to better health care among women?
- Is there a need to improve the status of women in rural Bangladesh? Will this proposal help?
- How will this benefit the village? Will these changes unduly disrupt rural life in Bangladesh?

Scenario 3

You are a group of middle-aged Bangladeshi men who are in positions of power in the village and the village council.

The proposed training center is the most preposterous idea you have ever encountered. You simply cannot understand why the government will even think of building it in your village since there are no women who are available to attend it. You will never allow your daughter or wife to attend a training institute. It is too dangerous, and who knows what might happen to them in there. It is your job to protect the women of your household! In any case they do not have the time to attend such classes. They are too busy learning to master the skills a woman should know—like cooking, cleaning, and child rearing. That is the purpose for which God created women just as he created men to provide for and protect the family.

You cannot see why the young women of today, your daughters especially, keep talking of wanting more freedom. Surely they have all the freedom they want. They decide on the meals, the children's needs, the workings of the household. They do not have to work at all—they are always at home—what a luxury! Everything is found for them and they still grumble. Women!

The training center will only disrupt village life and create chaos.

- Should the training center be built?
- Why is it important that the women of the village be trained in health care?
- Would the use of female health providers lead to better health care among women?
- Is there a need to improve the status of women in rural Bangladesh? Will this proposal help?
- How can it benefit the village? Will these changes unduly disrupt rural life in Bangladesh?

6

Women's Roles in Rural Sri Lanka

Anoja Wickramasinghe[****]

Introduction

This study, carried out in villages in the dry zone of Sri Lanka, attempts to evaluate the multiple tasks undertaken by women in both small-scale farm operations and the domestic sphere (Figures 6.1 and 6.2). In this context, patterns of time allocation were studied over a period of one year in order to discern gender role differences.

National Efforts to Integrate Women into the Development Process

Integration of women into the development process has recently become official policy in Sri Lanka. Much of the assistance towards development designed to promote the living standards of the rural poor has failed to help women, both in absolute terms and in relation to men. Therefore, the integration of women into development strategies both as agents and beneficiaries has become an economic imperative as well as a social equity goal. Yet the bottom-up development strategy, the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), which has been adopted for developing the rural areas of Sri Lanka since 1978 has not been able to obtain equal participation of men and women.

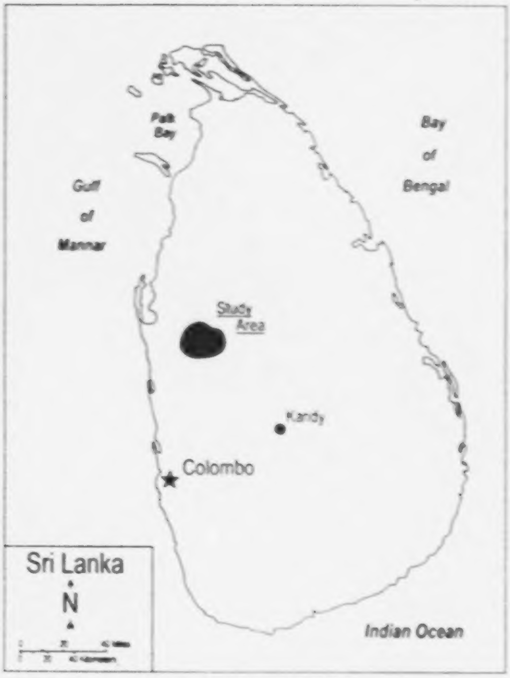
Although an attempt is being made at the national level by the Ministry of Plan Implementation and the Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka to promote women's participation in the process of development, this national effort has been largely ineffective in eradicating gender differences, especially in the rural sector. Instead of providing equal opportunities for both genders from the stage of planning development to the level of evaluation, a separate set of women's projects has been introduced. These projects aim at reducing poverty among rural women by providing assistance for income-generating activities, which tend to remain as a separate group of activities meant only for women. This is the situation noted in the package of IRDP which has been implemented so far in 12 administrative districts, i.e., Puttalam, Kurunegala, Kegalle, Nuwara-Eliya, Ratnapura, Monaragala, Hambantota, Matale, Gampaha, Kalutara, Badulla, and Matara.

Isolation of women's projects from the rest of the constituents in the IRDP package, automatically limits the proper participation of women in the strategy of rural development, which aims at promoting the physical infrastructure, the economy and human resources. On the other hand, the plans formulated and implemented at the national level often suffer from lack of baseline information, and so are unable to meet the needs of rural women satisfactorily. However, failure to recognize the vital role played by women in developing rural areas weakens the proper integration of women into development. The recognition of the multiple tasks played by rural women in the household unit, in their society and in the economy is a prerequisite for the formulation and implementation of plans for sustainable rural development.

Women in the Agricultural Labor Force

In Sri Lanka, as is the case in most countries, the economically active group is male dominated. According to the Census of Population in 1981, the proportion of economically active men was 74.5 percent. The female labor force was only 25.5 percent of the total labor force but this was exclusive of women who were engaged in production activities mainly during the peak agricultural seasons. This gender disparity in labor-force participation is a well-marked feature in all age categories (Figure 6.3), but between 1963 and 1981 there was a slow expansion in the participation of women in the labor force. The highest rate of women's participation in the labor force is in the age group 20 to 24 years and it remains almost constant until 43 years, and then decreases rapidly. In Sri Lanka, this reduction is often associated with the increasing demands of women's reproductive role. On the other hand, the highest rate of male participation occurs between the ages of 35 and 39 years and then decreases slowly until 49 years. Thereafter a rapid reduction in the participation rate is noted.

[****] Orginally printed as Chapter 13, pp. 159-178 in *Different Places, Different Voices*, eds. Janet Henshall Momsen and Vivian Kinnaird. London and New York: Routledge 1993. Used with permission.


Palk Bay
Bay of Bengal
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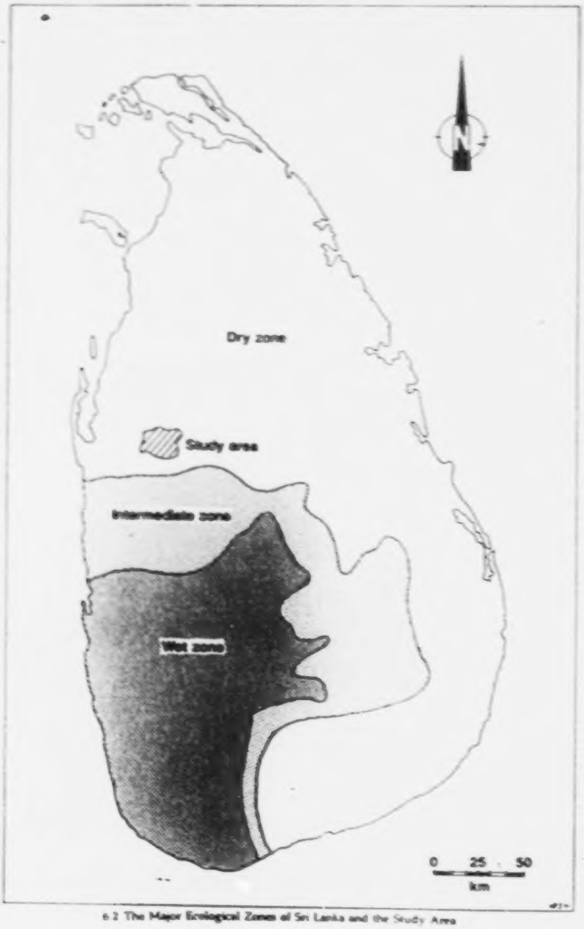
6.1 Sri Lanka


N
Dry zone
Study area
Intermediate zone
Wet zone
0 25 50
km

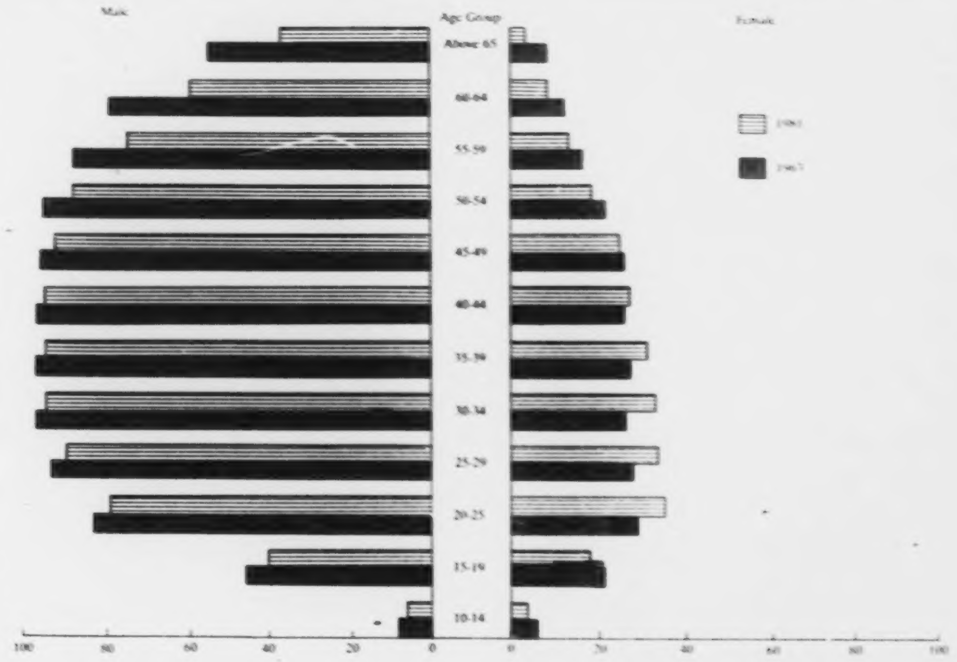
6.2 The Major Ecological Zones of Sri Lanka and the Study Area

Table 6.1 Division of Female and Male Labor in Agricultural and Fishing Activities

Category	Female	Male	Total
Paddy	17.1	46.0	38.8
Rubber and tea estate	67.8	19.9	31.7
Coconut estate	1.2	1.6	1.5
Other cultivation	10.1	17.7	15.8
Other agricultural work	3.9	9.8	8.3
Fishing	0.0	5.1	3.8
Total[a]	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing* 1981. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

[a] Some figures are rounded



6.3 The Labour Force Participation of Males and Females in 1963 and 1981 by Age Groups

source:Wickramasinghe,A. 1989b

The rural share of the labor force is 78 percent in Sri Lanka, mainly due to the confinement of 78 percent of the population to the rural areas. Just as in any other production sector, among agricultural sectors too the gender role difference is well noted. The proportionate share of women in agricultural sectors varies spatially and seasonally. One of the notable features of agriculturally based production activities is the absorption of a comparatively high proportion of women workers. Among women, 52.4 percent work in agriculture, whereas only 42.8 percent of the male labor force works in the agricultural sector.

A well-marked disparity in the gender distribution of labor among the sub-categories of agriculture is noteworthy. Here, the influence of the high rate of female participation in the plantation sector on the overall female participation in agriculture can be observed. Almost 68 percent of the females in the agricultural sector work in plantations, in intensive activities such as tea picking, weeding, and rubber tapping (Table 6.1). Men's share in this sector is comparatively low, accounting for only 20 percent of the total male workforce in agriculture, and is mainly involved in heavy labor and supervisory work (see Figure 6.3 for details).

Table 6.2 Division of labor in paddy cultivation

Category	Female	Male	Total
Own account workers	63.1	84.0	81.8
Paid employees	7.2	9.6	9.3
Unpaid family workers	29.7	6.4	8.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

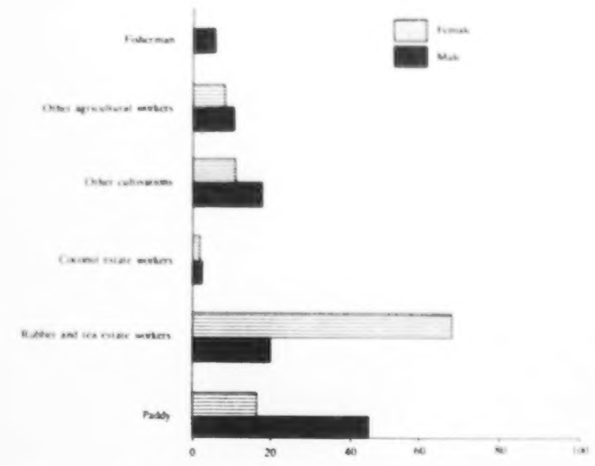
Source: Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing* 1981. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

As shown in Table 6.1 the proportionate share of labor in paddy cultivation is high having 38.8 percent of the total agricultural labor force. This accounts for 46 percent of the males and 17.1 percent of the females in all agricultural sectors. However, if one deconstructs paddy cultivation in order to identify the division of female labor according to employment status, a rather different picture is highlighted (see Table 6.2). Paddy cultivation which is mainly meant for subsistence is confined to small-scale farming and it is mainly an owner operated system. The proportionate share of female labor is low in comparison with the male's share, but the percentage of women working on their own farms is higher than in the other categories at 63 percent. Moreover, almost another 30 percent of the women work as unpaid family workers in paddy cultivation while male labor accounts for only 6 percent.

In addition to their engagement in paddy cultivation women play a prominent role in small-scale farm operations. These include the activities which deal with the production of dryland crops in the dry zone, and vegetables in the hill country and also the management of homesteads to produce a part of the daily food requirement of the family. In most of these productive activities, women work as unpaid family workers to produce a large proportion of the food requirements of the family and to subsidize their family income.

The Gender Role Difference in Agriculture

Gender role difference is a well-marked feature of both domestic and production activities in the agricultural sphere (Figure 6.4). This is significant in subsistence agriculture where agricultural operations are carried out by family labor and the adoption of new technologies is rare. In the present study, which was carried out in the area of Mauswewa village, the high rate of women's involvement in farm activities in both lowland paddy cultivation and highland cultivation is a prominent feature in small-scale farm operations (Figure 6.4). One of the features noted here in the agricultural sphere is the dominance of women in time-consuming and labor-intensive tasks while heavy work such as plowing of fields using draught animals, the sowing of paddy, the transport of harvested produce, threshing etc. is attended to by males. This gender-based division of labor in paddy farming is traditional, and is partly due to the acceptance in this culture of the female nature of time-consuming work such as transplanting and weeding, while heavy labor in waterlogged fields is considered men's work.



6.4 Distribution of Male and Female Labour in the Agricultural and Fishing Sector in 1981 (Percentage)

source: Wickramasinghe,1989b

However, in dry land farming, women's control over production activities is much greater than that in paddy farming (Table 6.3), partly due to the nature of the farming system itself. In addition, in the highlands, a few varieties of pulses, legumes, tubers, and vegetables are grown, either in rotation or in mixtures during the rainy season, and therefore labor requirements are much greater. Sequential planting, sowing, weeding and harvesting are the major activities that take place throughout this cultivation period, and as a consequence, unlike in paddy farming, the gender division of labor in farm activities is less significant. Women attend to a range of activities such as clearing the land, weeding, burning of shrubs, sowing, harvesting, processing and winnowing. Almost 65 percent of production activities in dryland farming are done by women while in paddy farming they carry out only 30 percent of the tasks.

Table 6.3 Sexual division of labor in agricultural activities

	Paddy cultivation		Dryland cultivation	
	percent		percent	
Activity	Female	Male	Female	Male
Field preparation	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0
Sowing	0.0	100.0	60.0	40.0
Weeding	90.0	10.0	90.0	10.0
Harvesting	60.0	40.0	80.0	20.0
Threshing	0.0	100.0	30.0	70.0
Winnowing/cleaning	80.0	20.0	80.0	20.0

Source: Author's fieldwork

Traditionally, women, as wives and mothers, are expected to see to the well-being of their family. With increasing household requirements and hardship in rural society, their role in domestic food production as unpaid workers has become prominent. Males are expected to migrate to earn cash and to do the heavy work, while women, in addition to farming activities, are confined to bringing up children and processing and preparing food. The multiplicity of women's responsibilities in rural society has become a prominent feature.

Women's Tasks in Agricultural Crop Production

With the introduction of high-yielding varieties of crops to dry-zone farming, particularly the short durational varieties which are largely meant for the market, the involvement of women in agricultural production has tremendously increased. This fact contradicts Boserup's (1970) work in Africa where, according to her observations, men were gradually taking more responsibility in agriculture (especially in the growing of cash crops) and at the same time women's workload and status in general appeared to have deteriorated. However, in Sri Lanka, the increasing need to produce food for family consumption and for the market, often forces women to invest their time and energy in agricultural activities, especially in small-scale crop production.

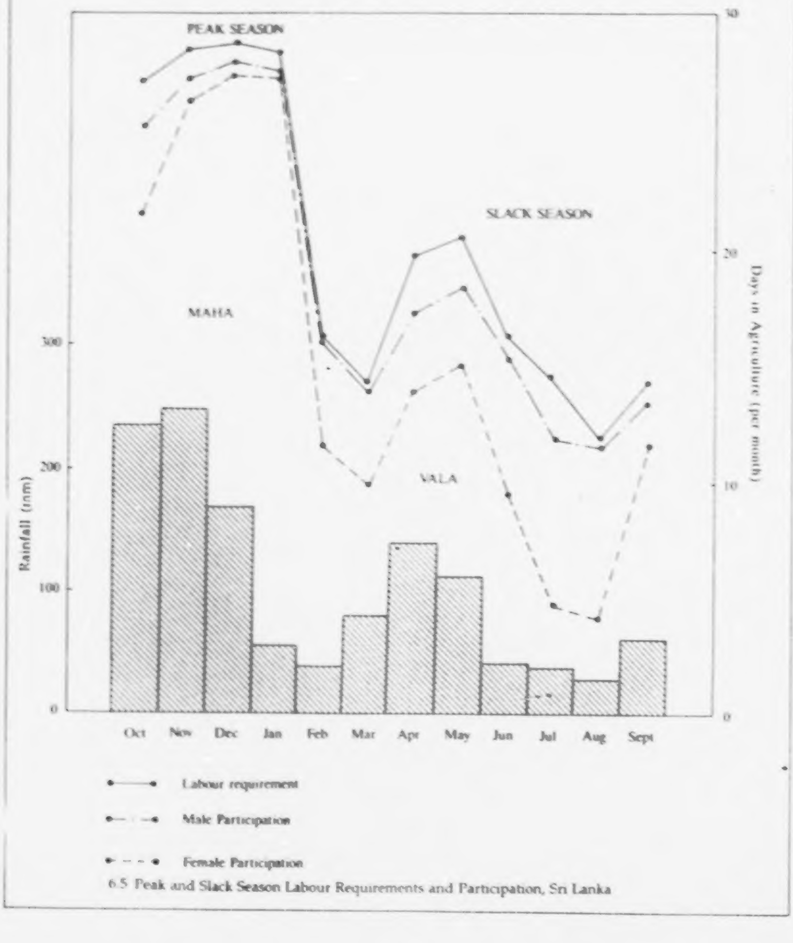
In the dry zone of Sri Lanka, the organization of agricultural production is largely controlled by the agro-climatic situation in which major crop production is confined to the rainy season. With the introduction of market-oriented cash crops in place of subsistence food crops, in association with the confinement of dryland farming into permanent blocks, women have taken on greater responsibilities for producing a range of crops in the highlands. With the increasing requirements for women's labor input in agriculture, particularly during the peak seasons, women perform as waged laborers, unpaid family workers, and workers in reciprocal exchange of labor.

Although the last two forms of labor are quite common, the supply of waged labor is determined by factors other than the availability of work and labor demand. The status of the family and its wealth, and the areal extent of their own agricultural land are the influencing factors which determine the engagement of women in the waged labor force. Women of low-income families often seek waged work to earn a cash income.

However, women often get paid at least 10 to 20 percent less than men even for equal amounts of work. Women's role in agriculture as unpaid family workers is a common phenomenon in remote dry-zone villages. Lending their own labor on an exchange basis for collective work is a traditional established system and is still prevalent among farm families. It is advantageous in activities such as transplanting and harvesting where work has to be completed within a limited time.

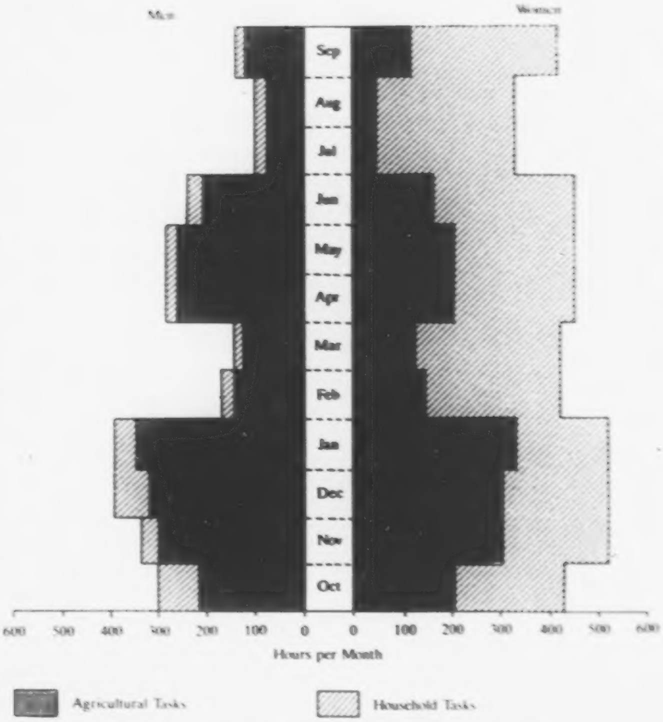
Seasonal Variations in Time-Use Patterns

One of the features noted in the study area is the restriction to one prominent crop during the *maha* (rainy) season, between October and February, and a second minor crop during the *yala* (*vala* or dry) season between April and August. This second crop is not widespread, but it is found in some areas when and if the south-western monsoon rain occurs (Figure 6.5). Seasonal changes in labor requirement and the availability of agricultural work have a direct impact on the pattern of women's involvement in both agricultural and domestic activities. During the slack seasons women's role in crop production is comparatively less than that of men and than in the peak season, due to the low labor requirement. In such situations, male members of the family spend their time in the field while women spend more time on home-based activities.



6.5 Peak and Slack Season Labour Requirements and Participation, Sri Lanka

In addition to the gender disparity in time use, another feature embedded in the annual time-use pattern is the seasonal difference in dividing time between domestic and production tasks (Figure 6.6). Activities contributing to reducing household food costs and to increasing household food security are a part of women's domestic burden. In this peasant society, the time allocated by farm women to domestic tasks often increases during the agricultural slack seasons. This situation is reversed during the peak seasons in agriculture when extra time is needed for processing and preserving of food to be used during periods of food scarcity or sold in hard times. The major home-based processing activities are the drying, cleaning, and storing of rice, cereals, and chilies and the extraction of medicinal and consumable oils.



6.6 Gender Disparity in the Seasonal and Annual Time-Use Pattern

The allocation of time by women to agricultural production is only slightly less than of men during the slack season (Table 6.4). Yet, the total number of hours devoted by women to work both in agriculture and in the house is considerably higher than that of men. Therefore, if one considers the total number of hours spent on work, then the woman's contribution to the family in the form of production and family expenditure savings is higher. Moreover, the inadequacy of the time available to women for leisure is bound to exhaust them.

Table 6.4 Time spent on agricultural and domestic activities by men and women in the dry zone (hours per month)

	Agric. peak season		Agric. slack season	
Activity	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**
Production activities (Total)	**299**	**298**	**235**	**245**
Of which are:				
Household activities	189	168	160	100
Wage/exchange labor	110	130	75	145
Housework (Cleaning, cooking)	199	90	220	60
Fetching water/collecting wood	50	30	60	30
Social/religious	12	8	15	15
Leisure/sleep	160	294	190	370
Total working hours	560	426	530	350

Source: Author's fieldwork

Fieldwork demonstrates that if the total workload of women is taken into consideration and evaluated correctly, then the contribution of the family unit is at least 32 percent greater than that of the man. Although men appear to have a heavy workload, women bear the burden of attending to a range of farm activities and often work longer hours to complete the work in the field and in the household, sacrificing their leisure and personal requirements. Women are more important in crop production in the dry zone where the multiple activities in agriculture are clustered into one season and hired labor is difficult to obtain and the use of machinery for cultivation practices is either limited or beyond the capacity of small-scale crop producers. Nevertheless, the vital role played by women in crop production is not adequately recognized.

Women in the Household Unit

The activity-based division of female labor into reproductive and productive is rather vague, firstly because crop production for family consumption is taken as part of reproduction, and secondly, because women often attend to both reproductive and productive activities simultaneously. For example, the collection of fuel is often done while clearing land for cultivation and the firewood is carried home after completing the day's work in the fields. Especially during the peak seasons in agriculture, many women, while engaged in crop production, try to do domestic work as well. During such periods, they change their activities more often than during the agricultural slack seasons. Often mothers of small children take their children to the fields, and nursing, bathing and feeding are done while attending to farm work. Similarly, production of crops for the family plot is neither considered as a gain nor as a way of saving family food expenditure.

Gender role difference in household tasks reveals a greater multiplicity of women's roles than of men's (Table 6.5). this is not only in the number of normal responsibilities undertaken by women, but also in making family decisions and handling the family income. In addition, maintaining the family's nutritional status, health, and children's education are a part of women's responsibilities.

It was noted in this study, that in an instance like a wife's sickness only 8 percent of men could cook. Very few men, about 5 percent, help their wives in the home, but even among these few, child care, the collection of fuel, and lighting the fire in the hearth are the most willingly undertaken tasks. Quite commonly, the burden of household work is shared by the children. The girls of the family often substitute for their mothers in looking after young children, carrying water and firewood and helping in the kitchen, while boys lessen the burden on the adults by helping in the fields and feeding livestock. Such substitution is often required, particularly during the peak season in agriculture when adults work longer hours in the fields to increase both income and crop output.

The aspirations of women in the study area are clearly directed towards the well-being of their family. A better standard of living, housing, clothing, and children's education, plus a stable income, employment opportunities for the next generation and land for crop production are the priorities mentioned by almost 173 housewives out of the 200 families living in the study area. Individual goals mentioned by women are rare and, in most cases, the physical burden of their multiple roles is taken as a part of their responsibility. Even providing better food for their own satisfaction is of little importance to them.

A gender difference in decision making is observed in both domestic and non-domestic spheres. Most public performances at social organizations are carried out by men, while female participation in village organizations is limited to 35 percent, and this too is mainly as a member of a religious or death assistance society. Hence it is not women's subordination which permits men to play a leading role in social matters, but rather lack of time and the difficulty of being present at meetings for organizing social welfare and development programs. However, in 92 percent of the cases studied, household heads tolerate and appreciate the expression of views on community matters by women, but, in general, they all accept the practical difficulties which prevent women's active participation in community-level organizations due to the extremely heavy burden of domestic work. In discussing matters relating to the community and the financial situation of families at village organizations, the ideas and consent of female partners are taken in to consideration.

However, the general situation noted in this study is quite different from that noted by Leach (1960) in the dry zone, where a *Sinhala* (dominant ethnic and linguistic group of Sri Lanka) husband and wife may work together in the fields, but there are no other occasions upon which they can be seen together in public with propriety. The purchasing of clothes for special occasions, attending ceremonies and religious festivals, visiting patients, and friends and relatives on special occasions by husband and wife together were observed in this study area. Similarly, unlike the case noted by Wickramasekara (1977), in which he identified the leading role of the household head, the husband, in dividing the work among the family, in this present study, both husband and wife discussed the labor requirements and divided the day's work. In very many cases, it is the wife who decides what should be done during the day by individual family members.

Table 6.5 Gender differences in participation in household activities (male and female shares are calculated as percent, based on the total number of hours spent weekly on each activity)

Activity	Female	Male	Total
Food processing and preparation	92	08	100
Winnowing and parboiling rice	100	00	100
Fetching water	98	02	100
Post-harvest grain storage	30	70	100
Collection of firewood	65	35	100
Preserving of food for later use	80	20	100
Keeping house and yard	95	05	100
Producing vegetables, tubers and fruit for family consumption	80	20	100
Raising of children	90	10	100
Bathing of children	80	20	100
Attending to sick in the family	85	15	100
Guiding children's education	97	03	100
Washing clothes	100	00	100
Caring for the elderly	90	10	100
Participation in village ceremonies	45	55	100
Participation in village social activity	10	90	100
Participation in village community development	05	95	100
Rearing animals (goats, cows, buffaloes)	50	50	100
Milking cows	100	00	100

Source: Author's fieldwork

As observed in an earlier study (Wickramasinghe 1989a), the leading role played by women in decision making within the family unit is bound to give better status to women in the domestic sphere. Almost 94 percent of the husbands, the household heads, agree that women's services for children and the elderly, seeing to children's education, family health and nutritional status, family planning and financial matters are better handled by women than men. However, as both men and women agree, the husband, the head, formally bears the responsibilities for the security of the family. The common consciousness of the importance of the women's role in the family unit is rewarding. Excluding 12 percent of the families studied where husbands were addicted to liquor or treated their wives as inefficient, most women are accepted as better mangers than men in regulating family expenditure and handling income. In general, in handling financial matters, as in any other matter pertaining to the family, some mutual consideration between men and women exists. It is very much so in the families in which the man's individual interests do not extend beyond purchasing items needed for chewing betel nuts.

Selling of excess agricultural products at the outside market, which is located about 10 kilometers away, is often done by the men. Nevertheless, the men give the cash obtained from such sales to their wives on their return from the market, and whenever possible, save a little for the future after mutual discussion. Decisions on major expenditures, other than foodstuffs purchased from the outside market, are made jointly.

However, financial matters related to credit and insurance are handled by men. The formal channels for obtaining credit are open to men due to their ownership of property, particularly land. Therefore, as noted by Palmer (1978) access to the resources which are needed in the application of agricultural technologies is in the hands of the men. Under these circumstances, provision of assistance or credit for the adoption of new agricultural technologies is mainly under the control of men.

Although all the women in the studied villages are engaged in agricultural activities either directly or indirectly, only 3 percent are given the opportunities for further training. This training is limited to dairying which is a traditional activity of the area. However, if knowledge of desirable low-cost agricultural technologies was widely spread among women, perhaps by introducing a mobile service, then women's self-confidence in farming would be improved.

If one examines the situation which prevailed in rural areas about two generations ago, it appears that society's expectations of women and the multiplicity of their responsibilities was less than at present. The expansion of families, scarcity of resources, particularly the land on which their families survive, and the inadequacy of crop production for a family's survival have a direct impact on women's tasks forcing them to work equally with the male partner in productive activities. Many complexities and responsibilities have been added to their traditional role of caring for children and elders, processing and preparing food and keeping house. On the other hand, the help that women have had from their children is tremendously reduced in rural society because of the increasing rates of school attendance. Instead of the assistance that women have had from their children, particularly from female children in their domestic work, and in rearing animals, it has become a responsibility of the mother to see to the children's educational achievements. The financial hardship and the extra workload borne by rural women are heavy, and consequently she is bound to involve herself in a range of non-domestic activities to meet increasing family food requirements, as well as to produce a marketable excess for cash or occasionally engaging in paid work, if possible.

Conclusion

The main observations of this study help to highlight a number of complexities and difficulties which could practically arise in promoting women's economic and social status in rural areas. Within small-scale agricultural operations in the dry zone, women's production activities are of vital importance, not only for better crop production but also for the survival of the peasant community. If one examines the variations existing in women's role in agricultural operations across the country, women's agricultural involvement in dry-zone areas is notable.

The division of labor in both agricultural production activities and in the household is partly a result of the acceptance of women's domesticity and femininity as a traditional norm. The double burden of work often discourages women from utilizing the opportunities available for acquiring vocational training, holding leading positions in the community and engaging in income earning away from the family.

In Sri Lanka the goal of equal opportunities and equal status are largely submerged in the aim of improving the livelihood of the society in general. Rural women in traditional society are obliged to work for the family well-being. This is not merely society's expectation but an attitude of rural women themselves. As expressed by almost 90 percent of the wives in the study area, motherhood and affection bound within the unit of a household, 'a family,' are prized by rural women. Often the mother's efficiency in handling those matters which are traditionally women's responsibility, gives her greater control and autonomy in the domestic sphere.

However, to improve the living conditions of rural women and integrate them into the development process, it is necessary to widen their training and employment opportunities, increase incomes and relieve women of the extremely heavy burden forced on them in the domestic sphere. The promoting of women's productive activities by the provision of income-generating avenues, assistance, training and exploitation of marketing facilities is convincing. But, as previously shown by the author (1987a and 1987b), in examining the projects introduced under the Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP) in the Kegalle district, the effectiveness and the sustainability of such projects to meet the broader objectives of improving the status of rural women cannot be assured. However, in the dry zone the prospects for introducing agro-based cottage industries are greater where there is diversity in crop production and seasonal variation in cropping exists. It is important to stimulate occupations preferred by women, especially in oil crushing, manufacturing dairy products, grain milling, and food processing, but, as mentioned earlier, desirable training, assistance, motivation, and marketing avenues are prerequisites.

The main problems which arise in promoting women's employment are related to time. At present, women tend to spend much time in the fields during the cultivating season. The additional time needed for agricultural activities is gained at the expense of leisure and sleep, and by reducing the time spent on caring for children and domestic work. The time available to the dry zone women in the study area for sleep is extremely low and unsatisfactory, particularly for women with small children and infants. On the other hand, it is not possible to find substitutes for women in the domestic sphere. Most families cannot afford hired help and even if they could, Sri Lankan employees would not be prepared to work long hours for another family's well-being. If a woman gives secondary importance to her domestic role, as a mother or a wife, then the unity, the happiness and the harmony of family life will deteriorate. Under these circumstances, the goal of equal opportunities and a satisfactory standard of living can only be achieved by increasing the work share of the male partners in the domestic sphere and reducing time constraints for women. Sharing of housework by the male partner would certainly reduce the time spent on domestic activities by women by almost 40 percent. Changes in society's expectations and attitudes might increase men's involvement in housework. However, it is difficult to expect this to occur quickly or among older people, and therefore, knowledge of domestic activities should be provided equally to both male and female children from the beginning of their school careers. It is also necessary to formulate rural societies which promote collaborative work.

Provision of child-care facilities would relieve women, of both physical and mental stress. The labor necessary for such purposes could be obtained from the village community itself on a rotational basis or on a wage basis. Accessible water, rural electrification, and simple technological improvements in the processing and preparation of food in the home would also be a great help. However, purchasing and maintaining such facilities is costly, and so they cannot be provided for low-income communities where employment is irregular and income inadequate to meet the bare necessities of life. Even payments for electricity supplies are not within the means of 82 percent of the villagers. Therefore, technological improvements for the rural community must follow improvements in economic and financial security.

It will take time as is noted by Whyte and Whyte (1982) to eradicate the acceptance of a secondary, submissive role for rural females, and the automatic allocation to males of a greater right to education. This situation often prevents women from holding leadership positions and taking initiatives in village-level activities. Gender role differences can be reduced by removing the social stigma of domestic work. One way of achieving this goal is through mutual understanding. Another way is by increasing the self-confidence and self-reliance of women themselves. An economic evaluation of women's tasks both in production and welfare activities would encourage society to give due recognition to women's work. If such efforts are made then the equity goal and changes in social attitudes will be achieved gradually.

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Learning Activity

Is It My Job or Yours?

Martha Sharma

Introduction:
Mao Zedong noted that "women hold up half of the world." Undoubtedly women play essential roles of production and reproduction in every society; however, women and their contributions are often undervalued or overlooked in surveys of work and economic productivity. In this learning activity students use research from a case study in Sri Lanka to compare the daily roles of women and men in a traditional agricultural society. Then they collect data in order to make role comparisons within their own community.

Grade Level: Grades 8-10

Time Required: 2-3 class periods, plus time outside of class for surveys

Standards Addressed*:
The geographically informed person knows and understands:

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective
4. The physical and human characteristics of places
10. The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

Skills:
In this learning activity students will practice

- asking geographic questions about production and reproduction
- acquiring geographic information about gender-specific roles
- organizing geographic information in graphs
- analyzing geographic information such as time-activity surveys and case profiles
- answering geographic questions about gender roles and work experience

Geographic Vocabulary and Concepts: gender-specific roles; time-activity surveys; gender equity, production, reproduction

Objectives: As a result of completing this learning activity, students will...

- develop a profile of the case study area (Sri Lanka)
- create graphs to demonstrate gender differences in time allocation in the case-study area
- describe characteristics of gender-specific roles in the case study area
- conduct a time/activity survey in the local community
- evaluate different views regarding role/time allocation and gender equity

Materials: Copies of Task Sheets #1-#5 and Data Sheets #1-#3; atlases, almanacs. Use Figures 6.1 and 6.2 from Chapter 6 as bases for the Task Sheets #1-4 and use Tables 6.3, 6.4. and 6.5 from Chapter 6 for Data Sheets #1-3, and information sheet at the end of this activity.

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* *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* 1994. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS). (Available from NCGE, Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1087, for $7.00 per copy.)

The Learning Activity

Background: Women have traditionally played multiple and complex roles in society. As important as their work is, women's contributions are frequently undocumented and rarely included in national income accounting systems. Nevertheless, women are generally responsible for such varied tasks as domestic food production and preparation; water and fuelwood gathering; care for children, the elderly, and the sick; and other duties related to household management. In addition, women may participate in income-generating activities such as paid agricultural labor and informal sector selling of surplus crops and crafts. (For a more comprehensive background on women in development, read "Women and Sustainable Development" in *World Resources 1994-95*, Washington, D.C.: WRI, 1994.)

"Women's Roles in Rural Sri Lanka" describes a case study set in the dry zone of north central Sri Lanka. Despite Sri Lanka's generally progressive socio-economic environment, women in this remote community continue to lead very difficult lives.

Although lines separating gender roles in contemporary American society may be less defined than in rural Sri Lanka, there are nevertheless certain tasks that still are widely viewed as "women's work" or "men's work." Before gender equity can be achieved, individuals must recognize the significance of all forms of work, not just those tasks assigned an economic value.

Introducing the Activity:

Have each student sketch on a sheet of paper a chart with a column for each member of his or her household (or alternatively, a column for male members of the household and a column for female members). Then have the students add each of the following tasks to the column on the chart that seems appropriate in terms of the task. (Amend items on the list to reflect the likely activities of your school community.)

washing dishes
taking out garbage
caring for younger siblings
gardening
doing laundry
washing cars
setting the table
grocery shopping
cutting grass
vacuuming
paying bills
car repair

Discuss the results of the activity. Do certain tasks seem to be "gender-specific"? Why? What exceptions can you observe? What might account for these exceptions?

Ask students if they think gender roles may have been more clearly defined when their grandparents were their age? Why? Have gender roles remained constant over time? (For example, in the nineteenth century most teachers and secretaries were males.) What might account for changes in gender roles in the United States today?

Executing the Activity:

Point out that in many developing countries, where agriculture continues to be the economic base and where women have limited access to education, little or no economic power, and few legal rights, women are confined to certain roles. Such patterns can be observed in the case study of the Mauswewa village area in Sri Lanka's dry north central region.

1. *What is it like in Sri Lanka?* (If time is limited, you may omit this step.)
   a. Divide students into four groups. Give each group copies of one of the Task Sheets. Direct each group to follow the instructions on its Task Sheet.
   Note: Each member of the group should complete a separate Task Sheet.
   b. Re-group the students into groups of four (one representative from each of the first groups) and allow time for them to brief each other on their findings. Encourage discussion of the interconnections among the various physical and human characteristics revealed by their respective investigations. For example: How does physical terrain influence population distribution? How do climate patterns affect agriculture? How are literacy and economic power connected? What other information would students like to have to make their profiles more complete?

2. *How is work distributed in rural villages in Sri Lanka?*
   a. Divide the class into three groups. Distribute to each group copies of one of the data tables. Have students discuss various ways in which they can graph the data in order to demonstrate gender differences in task and time allocation in the Mauswewa village area. When they have decided on an appropriate graphic form for the data, have each student construct a graph.
   b. When all graphs are complete, have students re-group into groups of three or six (with representatives from each of the original graphing groups). Encourage students to compare the graphs and discuss the implications of the allocation of tasks in the Mauswewa village area. For example, what types of work are most common for women? Who spends more hours at work—men or women? Who benefits most from the agricultural slack season? How does Sri Lankan society value women's work compared to men's (refer to Task Sheet #4)?
   c. As an oral exercise or as an in-class writing, have students describe the characteristics and consequences of gender-specific roles in the case study area.

3. *To what extent do gender-specific roles define the lives of the people in our local community?*
   a. Provide students with copies of Task Sheet #5, "Time/Task Survey." Have each student complete one copy of the survey based on his or her use of time in a twenty-four hour period. Each student should complete the remaining two copies of the survey by interviewing an adult female and an adult male family member or friend.
   b. Each student can construct graphs for his or her surveys or the class can compile the results of all surveys and construct graphs for the cumulative results. When the graphs are completed, encourage comparison of the graphs from the Mauswewa village area and the local community. For example, are there certain gender-specific roles in the local community? In what ways is the division of work/time allocation in the local community similar to that in the Mauswewa village area? In what ways is it different? How do students account for these similarities and differences?

Concluding the Activity:

Are women disadvantaged by traditional gender-specific role allocations?

Allow time for discussion of the concept of "gender equity."

a. Are some tasks performed more effectively by men or women, or is it a matter of tradition and cultural conditioning?
b. In what ways are gender-specific tasks and education connected? For example, does lack of education exclude women from certain roles? Does the time commitment of traditional task allocation deny women time for education?
c. What measures can be taken to ensure greater gender equity? (For example, by governments?...by local women's groups?...by international development organizations?)

Evaluating the Activity:

a. Assessment of students' maps and graphs
b. Observation of students' participation in discussions
c. Evaluation of oral or written description and analysis of issues related to task/time allocation and gender equity

Sources

Wickramasinghe, Anoja. "Women's Roles in Rural Sri Lanka." Chapter 6 in this publication.

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Alternative Strategies or Extensions:

1. Students can assess the presentation of gender-specific roles in the media by observing role assignments in TV commercials or magazine advertisements.

2. Students can assess changing attitudes toward gender specific roles by preparing a questionnaire and surveying people in different age groups, e.g., teenagers, individuals in their 20s, in their 40s, in their 60s, etc., about their performing selected tasks.

TASK SHEET #1: A Country Profile: Sri Lanka

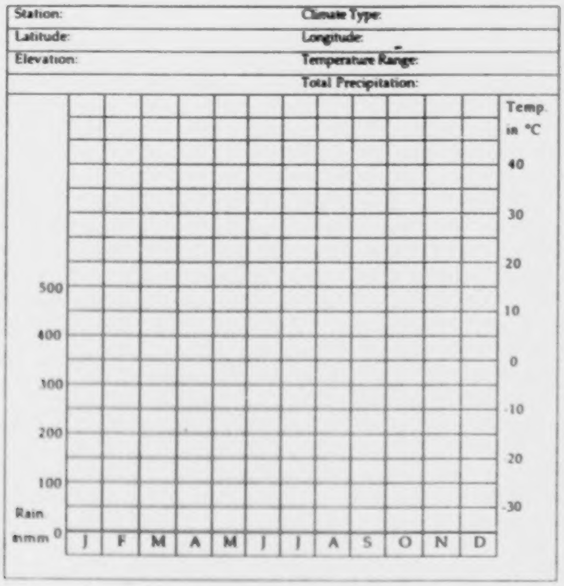
The Physical Environment: Land and Water

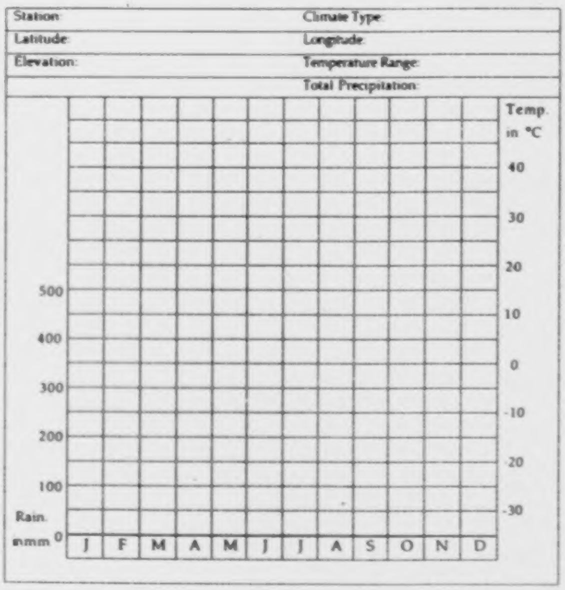
Use an atlas to identify land and water features of Sri Lanka. Locate and label these features on the map. Use a copy of Figure 6.2, Map of The Major Ecological Regions of Sri Lanka and the Study Area

TASK SHEET #2: A Country Profile Sri Lanka

The Physical Environment: Climate

Use the climate data below to construct climate graphs for the stations indicated. Label each station on the Map of Sri Lanka. Use a copy of Figure 6.2, Map of The Major Ecological Regions of Sri Lanka and the Study Area.





Colombo (7 m) 6° 54'N, 79° 52'E

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Prec. (mm)	82	66	115	256	336	195	129	97	155	362	309	152
Temp.(° C)	27.6	26.4	27.2	27.8	28.0	27.2	27.2	27.2	27.2	26.7	26.1	25.8

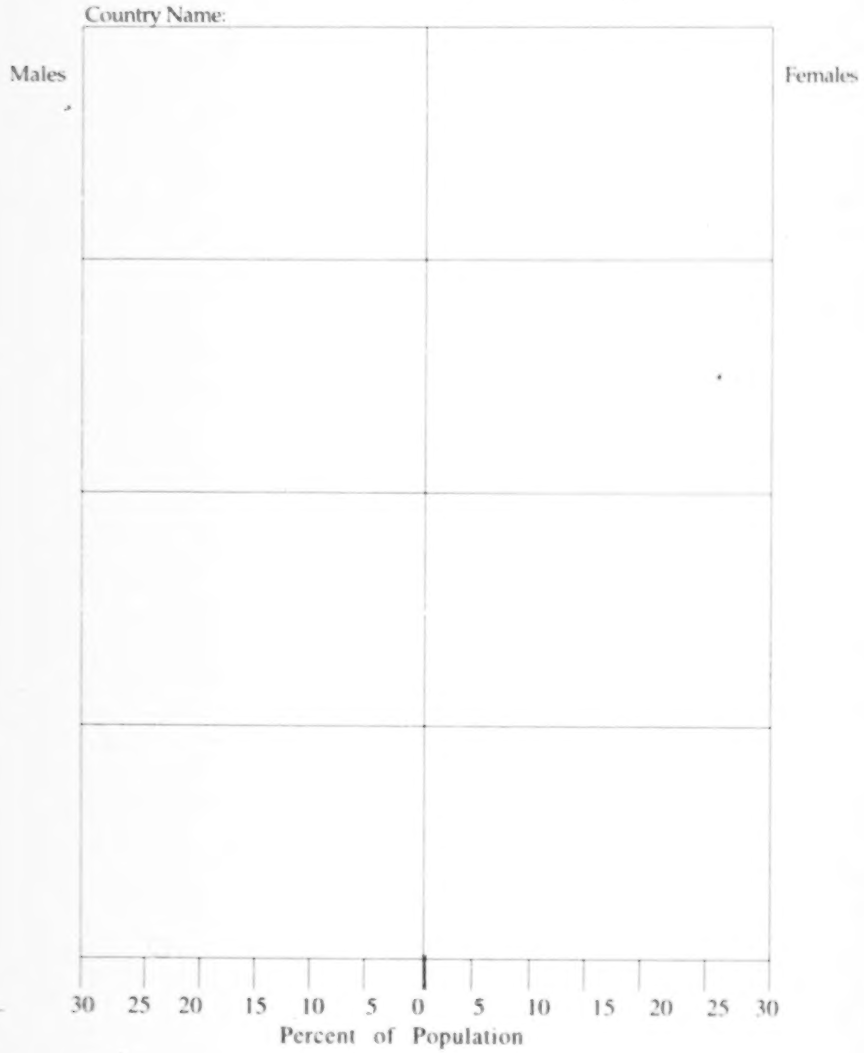
Vavuniya (98m) 8°45'N, 80°30'E

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Prec. (mm)	138	54	63	143	111	12	27	68	79	223	293	277
Temp.(° C)	24.6	25.6	27.5	28.8	28.9	29.0.	29.0	28.7	28.6	27.4	26.0	25.0

TASK SHEET # 3: A Country Profile: Sri Lanka

The Human Environment: Population Growth

Use the demographic data below to construct a modified population pyramid for Sri Lanka. What does the shape of the pyramid suggest about Sri Lanka's population? Label the Mauswewa village area on the Map of Sri Lanka. Use a copy of Figure 6.2, Map of The Major Ecological Regions of Sri Lanka and the Study Area.



Total Population: 18,079,000 (1995)

	0-19	20-39	40-59	60 +
Male	20%	16%	9%	4%
Female	19%	16%	10%	4%

TASK SHEET #4 : A Country Profile: Sri Lanka

The Human Environment: Population Characteristics

Use an almanac or database to complete the demographic table below. Label Sri Lanka's major urban areas and the Mauswewa village area on the map of Sri Lanka. Use the Major Ecological Zones of Sri Lanka and the Study Area (Figure 6.2) for this activity.

Percent Population in Urban Areas	
Percent Population Employed in Agriculture	
Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings	
Literacy Rate	Male: Female:
Average Number of Years of School Completed	Male: 7.7 years (1990) Female: 6.1 years (1990)

TASK SHEET #5: Time/Task Survey

In an average twenty-four hour period, approximately how many hours do you spend in each of the following tasks?

1. At work (actual time on the job) ______________________________
2. In school (actual class time) ______________________________
3. Food preparation ______________________________
4. Shopping ______________________________
5. Housework (Cleaning, washing dishes, laundry) ______________________________
6. Child care (feeding, bathing, etc.) ______________________________
7. Eating meals ______________________________
8. Recreation (television, sports, reading) ______________________________
9. Sleeping ______________________________
10. Other (identify) ______________________________

DATA SHEET #1

DATA SHEET #1

Division of Labor by Gender (%) in Agricultural Activities

Use Table 6.3 in Chapter 6: Seasonal Divisions of Labor in Agricultural Activities

DATA SHEET 2#

Time Spent (hours per month) on Agricultural and Domestic Activities

Use Table 6.4 in Chapter 6: Time Spent on Agricultural and Domestic Activities

DATA SHEET #3

Gender Differences in Participation in Household Activities (as percentage of total hours spent weekly per each activity)

Use Table 6.5 in Chapter 6: Gender Differences in Participation in Household Activities

Information Sheet on Sri Lanka with Comparative Data

Adult literacy:	1970	1990	
Male	83%	93%	(U.S.: 99%)
Female	69%	84%	(U.S.: 99%)

Females percentage in labor force 1992:	(World 27%)	(U.S.: 41%)

1990 Av. yrs. of schooling age 25+ 1990:	males	7.7	(World: 5.8; U.S.: 12.2)
	females	6.1	(World: 4.3; U.S.: 12.4)

Maternal mortality rate	1980-90: 80 (per 100,000)
	U.S.: 8/100,000) (live births)

Women's average earnings as Percent of men's	1980	1990
agric.	85	92
non-agric.	88	90

Source: World Bank 1991. *Social Indicators of Development.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

7

Invisible Female Agricultural Labor In India*****

Parvati Raghuram

Introduction

Indian agriculture is purported to be a male-dominated activity. The 1977-78 National Sample Survey data estimates the female rural labor force as 61 million as against 139 million males. Seventy per cent of the total persondays is accounted for by males and about four-fifths of the total workdays are spent in agriculture. Thus official data confirms Boserup's (1970) analysis of the Indian farming system as male dominated, a characteristic of plow cultivation. Women are either invisible or considered as agricultural helpers. There is a need to reassess these conclusions and to bring out inherent biases in the definition of workers and in data-collection techniques.

The Indian government has changed its definition of "workers" in every census. This has led to problems of non-comparability of data. There have also been inherent biases in the classification of "workers." For example, the 1961 census asked a loaded question based on interpretation of key words such as "cultivator," "agricultural laborer," and "household industries": "Are you working as cultivator, agricultural laborer, working at household industries or working under any other category other than the three mentioned?" The 1971 census asked: "What is your main activity? What is your other activity?" (Government of India 1971). In Indian society where the social ideal prescribes the withdrawal of women from the workforce, the women usually see their main activity as housekeeping and child care. Thus female contribution to agriculture remains unenumerated. In the 1981 census, respondents were questioned about their main activity in the previous year and about any other work they may have done in that year. The respondents were then categorized as main workers if they had worked more than 183 days in the year, and marginal workers if they worked less (Government of India 1981). The use of a minimum time criterion has also led to the exclusion of many female laborers whose contribution to field labor is concentrated into a few months of peak labor demand based on the seasonal requirements of the local crop calendar. The practice of interviewing the household head, who is generally assumed to be male, has compounded the problems of fluctuation and underenumeration of female participation in agricultural labor (Anker 1983).

The analysis of time-use data goes a long way in correcting these imbalances. However, methods of data analysis have also served to perpetuate the male bias in enumeration of agricultural contributions. Some empirical studies dealing with total "farm labor" and using time data have, however, equated women's work time with half or three quarters that of a male operator, on the assumption of standardizing the differences in wage rates (Kahlon *et al.* 1973) and/or productivity. This assumes a parity between wage rates and productivity; productivity being standardized for all categories of men, irrespective of age, state of health or nutritional status. A critique of such praxis has been slow to evolve and has been spearheaded by feminist economists (Sen 1988) but has failed to change current practices significantly. Such "standardization" still forms the basis for articles in such leading Indian journals as *Studies in the Economics of Farm Management*. There is a need for a sounder empirical base in order to place the contribution of women to Indian agriculture in its correct perspective. Hopefully, this chapter goes some way towards achieving these goals.

This chapter is based on data collected over 12 months in 1983-4. This present analysis is confined to the contribution of adult family and wage labor in work on 76 farms in Karoli, Sangli district, Maharashtra (Figure 7.1). The amount of total agricultural work done by women follows the seasonal pattern of crop calendar. The total agricultural work is desegregated in terms of number of persons and the time spent by various categories of labor in agricultural activity. The chapter concentrates upon labor use on owners' farms and is not concerned with that which is hired out.[1]

***** Originally printed as Chapter 9, pp. 109-119 in *Different Places, Different Voices*, eds. Janet Henshall Momsen and Vivian Kinnaird. London and New York: Routledge 1993. Used with permission.

[1] This analysis is based on data taken from a 1983-84 survey study in Karoli, Sangli District, Maharashtra, India by Elizabeth Oughton.

PAKISTAN
New Delhi
NEPAL
BANGLADESH
Dhaka
Calcutta
Gujarat
Maharashtra
Bombay
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
Madras
SRI LANKA
Colombo
India
N
0 100 200 300 Miles
0 100 300 Kilometers

7.1 India

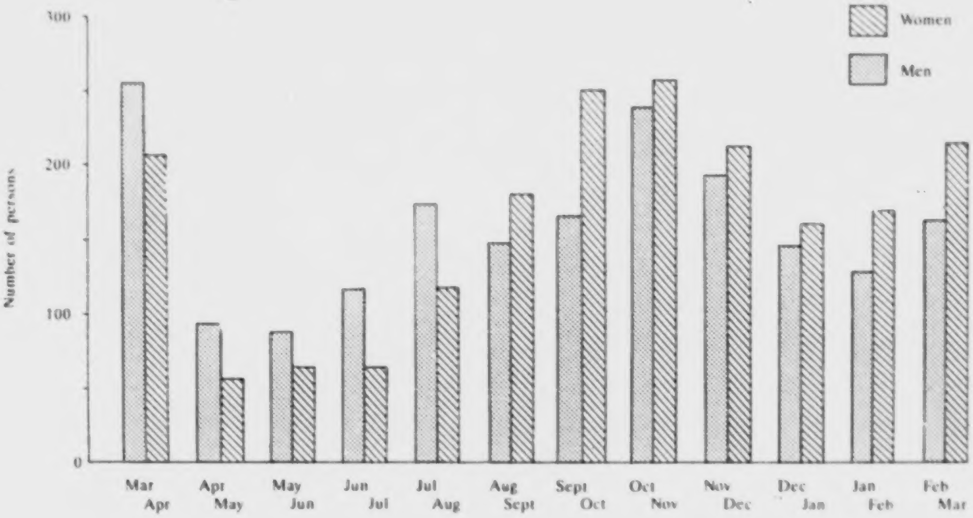
Size of Adult Family Labor Force

In our study, the total number of female householders engaged in agricultural activity exceeds that of male householders. This pattern is observed over 7 months of the year (Figure 7.2). There is a seasonal peak of female labor in October-November. Female contribution to familial labor location of agricultural tasks is maximum during the monsoon and in winter, with two seasonal peaks in September-October-November and February-March. The dry season is the slack period, characterized by greater male contribution. The gender specificity of tasks is such that male labor is used more evenly across the year. The significance of female family labor in the agricultural year then, is clearly established.

Time Allocation on Own-Farm Work and Sex Typing of Tasks

The data for time spent on specific tasks was collected by interviewing and using a one-month recall. The working day has been divided into three time units. Time unit 1 indicates 0-4 hours spent in one agricultural task on one crop or on animal care. This is equated with about half a day's work. Time unit 2, or a full day's work extends for 7 hours. These figures have been aggregated for the number of days spent on that operation. In cases where the respondent reported not knowing how long the work was done for, or if the number of days spent on a particular task is unknown, the data have been adjusted to exclude such individuals from the analysis.

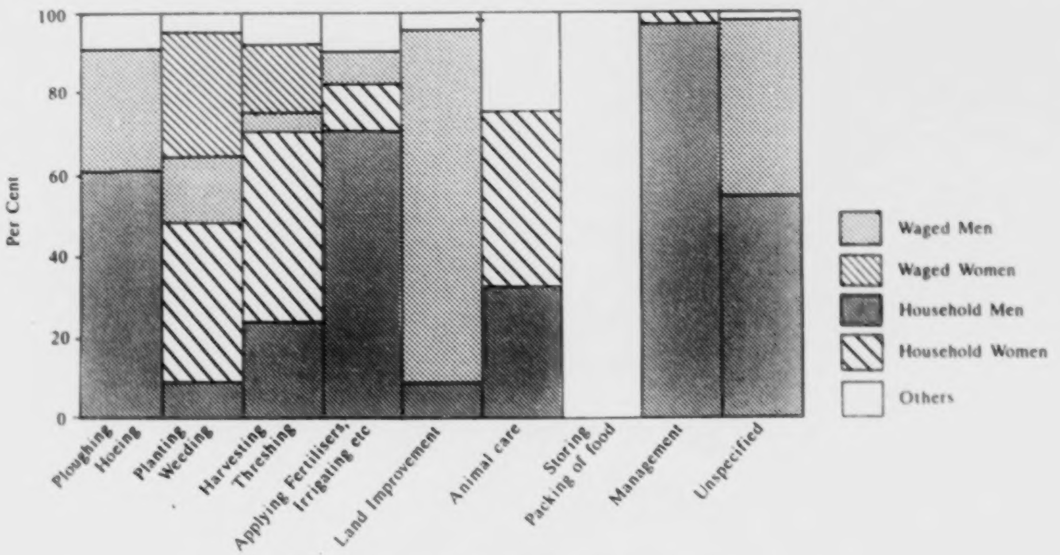
Measures of time spent in various agricultural operations indicate that even in the slack period, women dominate the agricultural scene. The only large positive differential for male labor is in March-April, the peak of the plowing season. The maximum number of hours spent by women on agriculture on their own farms is in February-March when 3,292 time units of work were put in. The minimum was in May-June when 1,852 time units were counted. Thus sex typing of tasks and seasonal variations in labor demand determine the work patterns of labor. Field labor is dominated by men at most times of the year while animal care is a female task. In the field, women provide the major labor force for activities such as harvesting-threshing and sowing-planting-weeding-pruning. Plowing-hoeing-harrowing, application of fertilizers, pesticides or irrigation water, storing and packing food and land-improvement activities, such as building *bunds* (low mud walls used to separate fields) and deepening wells are male tasks. Management and supervision are best described as family occupations with male domination being replaced by female household labor during periods of peak demand.



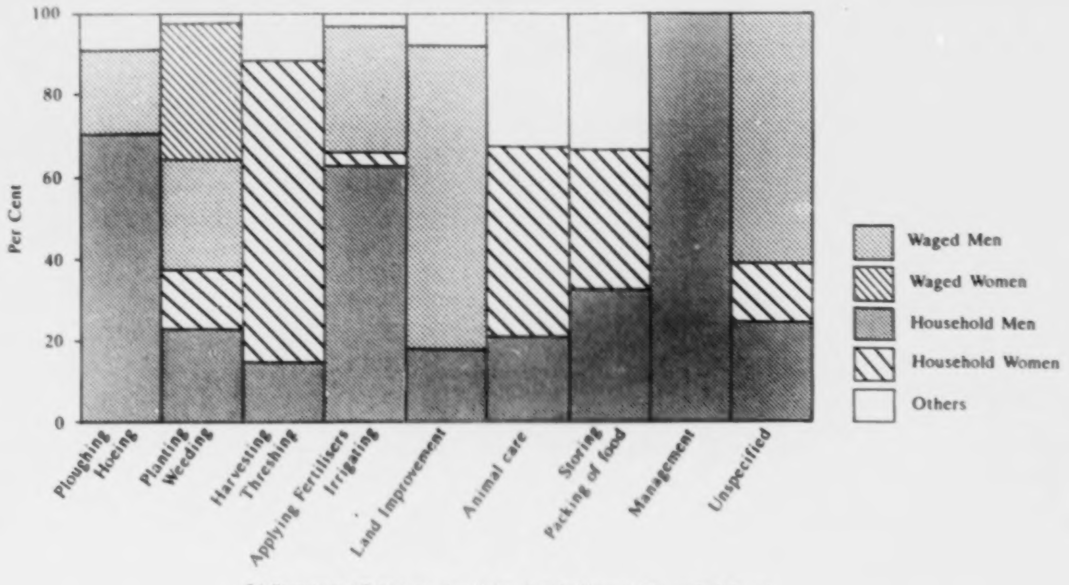
7.2 Gender Differences in Household Agricultural Labor

Sex specificity of tasks is more rigid for women than men (Figures 7.3 and 7.4). Men often participate in activities categorized as female but the reverse is rarely observed. There is some evidence that men increase their contribution to animal care in order to free women for female specific agricultural labor, such as harvesting and threshing. There are some instances of women participating in plowing-hoeing but its occurrence is extremely rare. However, women do participate in heavy field labor, in land-improvement work and in application of modern farming techniques including irrigation and fertilizer application. Interchangeability of tasks is not very common and is not an indicator of complementarity in labor allocation between sexes. Women's job alternatives remain limited, and interchangeability of tasks usually described as gender specific only takes place between adult members of the household for work on their own land. Even for similar tasks there is not parity between male and female wages. The social norms informing the gender specificity of tasks is of greater significance in defining wage labor than household labor and among children than among adult household members.

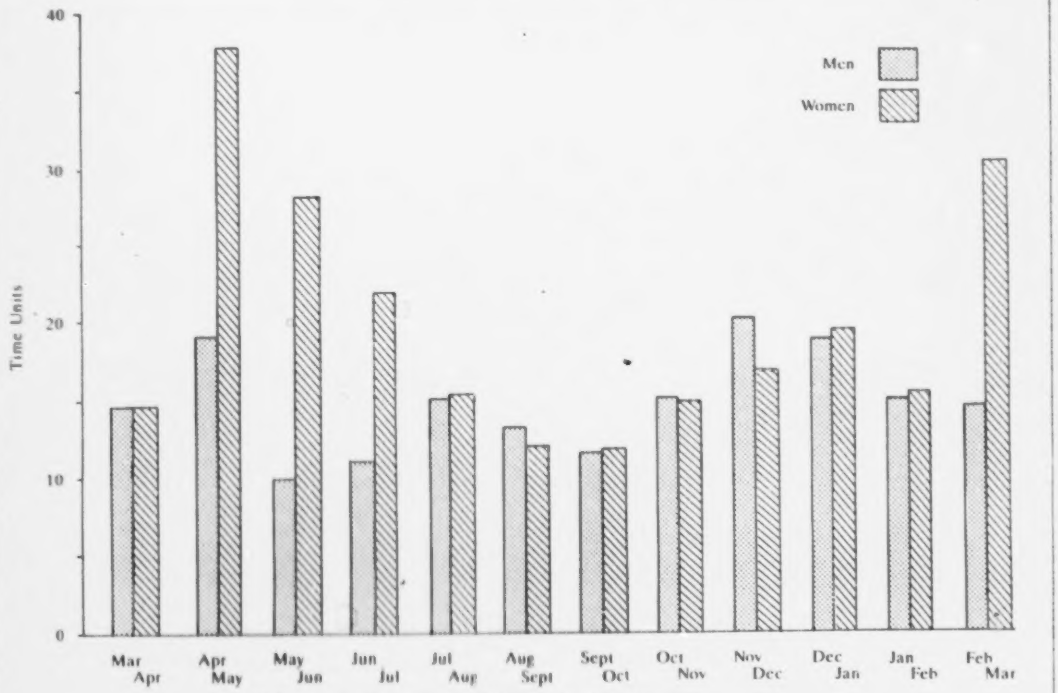
The average time spent on agricultural activities by an individual in one month, or the average length of the "work month" is greater for women than for men. Even national statistics acknowledge that the agriculturally productive activity of a farm woman occupies 83 per cent of her total workday as compared to 78 per cent for men. Our data also reveal entirely different patterns of seasonality for men and women. Contrary to expectations, the work time for women on their own farms is greater during slack period. There are two possible reasons for this (Figure 7.5). Firstly, the family responds to peak labor requirements in the harvesting-post-harvesting period by increasing the number of persons employed. Hence, the individual load of own-farm work is reduced during the peak period. Secondly, the evidence is also skewed by the presence of a large number of female peasants who take up agricultural wage work on larger landholdings during periods of peak female labor demand, reducing the time spent working on their own farms. The dry season is also the period of fodder scarcity, necessitating increased time-use on fodder collection, a task usually done by women and children. The longest working hours are put in by wage laborers, but their incidence is low in comparison to familial labor.



7.3 Average Agricultural Labor Units by Month by Gender of Household Members



7.4 Proportion of Total Agricultural Labor Done by Men and Women-Peak Period



7.5 Proportion of Total Agricultural Labor Done by Men and Women-Slack Period

Labor Allocation in Different Landholding Sizes

Women's contribution to agriculture is not homogenous in society. We need to see the linkages between the gender-based differences in agriculture and characteristics of the individual and the household. Caste, class, and religion are some of the significant determinants of intra-regional disparities in familial labor allocation. The dominant social norms subscribed to the withdrawal of women from the agricultural labor force with increasing wealth. We have identified similar processes operating in households with larger landholdings.

The households included in this analysis possess some land of their own towards which some family labor input was made. The time spent on animal care has been subtracted for the present since the size of the landholding was not seen to have any direct bearing on time spent in animal care. The households have been divided into five categories (1 hectare=2.47 acres):

1. smallest peasant holdings 1 hectare or less (2.47 acres or less);
2. households having between 1 and 2 hectares (2.47-4.94 acres) of land;
3. households with between 2 and 4 hectares (4.94-9.88 acres) of land;
4. households with between 4 and 6 hectares (9.88-14.82 acres) of land;
5. largest landholding of at least 6 hectares (14.82 acres) of land.

The time spent in agricultural activity and the size of the labor force in the above five categories, standardized per hectare, reveals a decrease in the contribution of female labor as landholdings increase in size. Similar patterns have been observed in the Andean region (Deere 1982) and in Java (Hart 1980). Gender specificity of tasks is of greater significance in households with larger landholdings. There was no incidence of women plowing in households owning over 10 acres of land. The time spent on agricultural work is much higher for women in poorer peasant households. Harvesting-threshing and sowing-planting-weeding-pruning follow the patterns of seasonality and decreasing contribution of female householders with increasing landholding size. Capital-intensive operations such as application of fertilizers, pesticides or irrigation water, however, peak at the second- and third-lowest landholding sizes. These activities are of greater significance in larger landholdings with greater capital availability. In the largest landholdings, the contribution of women once again decreases as women gradually withdraw from farm labor. Heavy agricultural work is of increasing significance in the work schedule of women from smaller peasant households.

Inter-seasonal variability of total female labor use is higher for small peasant households than for larger landowners. The data on time spent per woman in agricultural activity, standardized per hectare, has a much greater range in the smallest landholding category. The small landowning women contribute peak labor inputs on their own farm in March-April, which is a slack period for females in big landholding households. The women from small peasant households have a second peak labor demand time in the planting-sowing season in July-August. Their contribution to own-farm work in the harvesting-threshing season, the period of peak labor demands in the middle-peasant households, is remarkably low, suggesting that the women seek wage employment in these activities in larger landholding households. The peak contribution of females in the largest landholding households is in the post-harvest season.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals the significance of female agricultural labor in the village of Karoli, India. Women were found to be working longer hours than men and more women worked on their own farms than did men. The gender division of familial labor in agriculture is thus biased towards the female adult. Invisible female agricultural labor in India needs to be disaggregated from "family help" and accepted as a partner in agricultural production. This requires a realization of the bias in data collection techniques in large government organizations and a move towards correcting these biases. This must necessarily be preceded by more empirical studies.

Once women's significance in their contribution to agricultural production is recognized, variants in the labor pattern caused by seasonality need to be considered. Since the range of activities that women perform is limited, the problem of time imbalance arises between periods of peak female labor demand and the slack months. Only animal husbandry, which shows no marked seasonality in labor requirements, serves to even out the work loads of women and provides alternative sources of income for female adult householders. Where the setting up of dairy co-operatives has led to the replacement of female labor with that of men, it not only causes female unemployment but increases the effects of seasonality of women's agricultural labor, which may be masked as the underemployment of women. State-sponsored employment-guarantee schemes need to take this into account.

Finally, given the heavy time demands of agricultural labor on women, there is a need to re-evaluate the social categorization of males as "providers" and females as "housekeepers" and "childrearers" and question men's low contribution to domestic labor in India.

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Learning Activity

Difficult Choices: Navigating the Intersections of Modern Development and Environmental Degradation in India

Kiran B. Chhokar

Introduction:
Environmental degradation affects us all, but it affects the poor more than it affects the rich, and it affects poor women more than it affects poor men. All over the world, the demands of modern development destroy, or at least reduce, the ability of the environment to support the people who depend directly upon it. As women are almost exclusively responsible for some important aspects of natural resource management, such as food processing, fuel collection, and consumption of goods in the household, dwindling and degrading resources affect them more than men. Women are hit even harder because they are usually denied equal access to resources and opportunities that would help them improve their lives, such as education, credit, property, technology, political power and equal participation in decision making.

In this learning activity, students explore through role playing how environmental degradation and social norms and pressures affect the lives of the males and females in a peasant family in rural India. Students can also seek examples of environmental degradation in their own community or country and identify similarities and differences of its effects on people.

Grade Level: Grades 10-12

Time required: 3-5 class periods.

Standards Addressed*:
The geographically informed person knows and understands:
9. the impact of migration on physical and human systems.
14. how human actions modify the physical environment.
15. how physical systems affect human systems.

Skills: In this learning activity students will practice
- locating places on maps
- analyzing causal relationships
- engaging in oral expression
- analyzing gender relations
- problem solving

Geographic Vocabulary and Concepts: environmental degradation, migration, environmental refugees

Objectives:
As a result of completing this learning activity, students will
- Understand the relationship between modern development and environmental problems
- Chart the cause and effect sequence of events to explore some of the complex linkages between the natural and cultural environment.
- Understand some social and economic factors that contribute to human migration.
- Through role playing, gain insight into the characters' circumstances, problems, motives and actions.
- Understand the inequality in women's control over productive resources and in their participation in decision-making.
- Analyze the differential effects of migration on the lives of males and females in the case study.
- Develop and discuss strategies for the family in the case study to deal with their situation.

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*_Geography for Life: National Geography Standards_ 1994. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Research and Exploration on behalf of the American Geographical Society (AGS), Association of American Geographers (AAG), National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), and National Geographic Society (NGS). (Available from NCGE, Leonard 16A, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705-1087, for $7.00 per copy.)

Materials: Atlas or Map of India and Gujarat (Figure 7.6). Readings: case study; glossary; Additional information: Pencil and paper; cards for character roles (teacher: you can create these yourself, or ask students to create them as a small group activity).

Video on environmental degradation in an area with which the students are familiar.

Optional: Any props the students may want to create for the role play.

The Learning Activity:

Background: Dwindling forests, falling water-tables, polluted or contaminated drinking water, declining fertility of soil—these are some manifestations of degrading environments. Much of this degradation is the result of our pursuit of economic "development." We have been extracting natural resources faster than they can be replenished and generating more wastes than the environment is capable of absorbing. This form of development has sharpened inequalities between rich and poor countries, between the rich and the poor within the same country, and between men and women.

In many parts of the developing world, the land now provides less food and less fodder than before. Rural women have to walk longer distances to gather drinking water and fuelwood. Their work day becomes longer and their hours of rest shorter. In such situations, men often migrate to cities in search of employment, and their tasks and responsibilities also fall to the women remaining behind. Sometimes whole families migrate in search of adequate livelihoods. Migration, however, does not guarantee a better life to these ***environmental refugees***.

"Musings of a Fragmented Family" at the end of this activity describes the lives of the members of one such family of Bhangadh village in Gujarat, a state in western India. The case study is ompilation of the real life experiences of several people of that village.

Introducing the Activity:

Begin by discussing the concept of fragmentation. What is a fragmented family? How do families get fragmented? What happens when an integrated family unit falls apart?

You could use the analogy of fragmentation of the family to discuss the concept of environmental degradation. When an integrated environmental unit is subjected to certain pressures and falls apart, it is no longer healthy any more and the results can be just as traumatic as the fragmentation of a family.

Identify a video film in your library on environmental degradation in or around your community, or one of a well-known case such as the Love Canal or Cancer Alley. Show the film to the class and discuss how modern development can lead to serious environmental pollution and degradation.

Suggested films: See resources list at the end of this book.

Executing the Activity:

1. Have students read the case study "Musings of a Fragmented Family." Give them copies of the Glossary and Additional Information to improve their understanding of the case study.
2. Ask students to identify Gujarat state on the political map of India in their atlases. Give each student an outline map of India with Gujarat indicated. Have them mark Surat, Bhaunagar, Ahmedabad, and Junagadh on the map.
3. As a home assignment or class activity, ask pairs of students to chart the course of events in the case study to show causes and effects. They should also say what could have been done at each stage to prevent negative consequences. They could present it as a flow chart with an accompanying note on possible preventive steps at each stage. Or they could use the following format:

Cause	Effect	What could have been done?
1.	a.	
	b.	
2.		
3.		

4. Have students perform a role play based on the case study. The family is together for the festival of Divali, and is trying to figure out how to repay their steadily increasing debt and retrieve their land from the moneylender. Make sure that the students have carefully read the case study. Use the note "Role Play: What can the family do?" to set up the role play.

Assign roles to students either through consensus or based on your understanding of who would be most appropriate for which part. You could also assign women's roles to male students and vice-versa. Give each of these students the assigned character brief typed on a card. Ask the rest of the class to observe.

Briefly describe the situation and the problem. Clarify any doubts about the plot or characters before proceeding with the role play. Allow about five minutes for the actors to read and understand their roles.

As an alternative you could divide the class into three or four groups and ask each group to enact the role play simultaneously in different parts of the classroom. Each group must have a few observers.

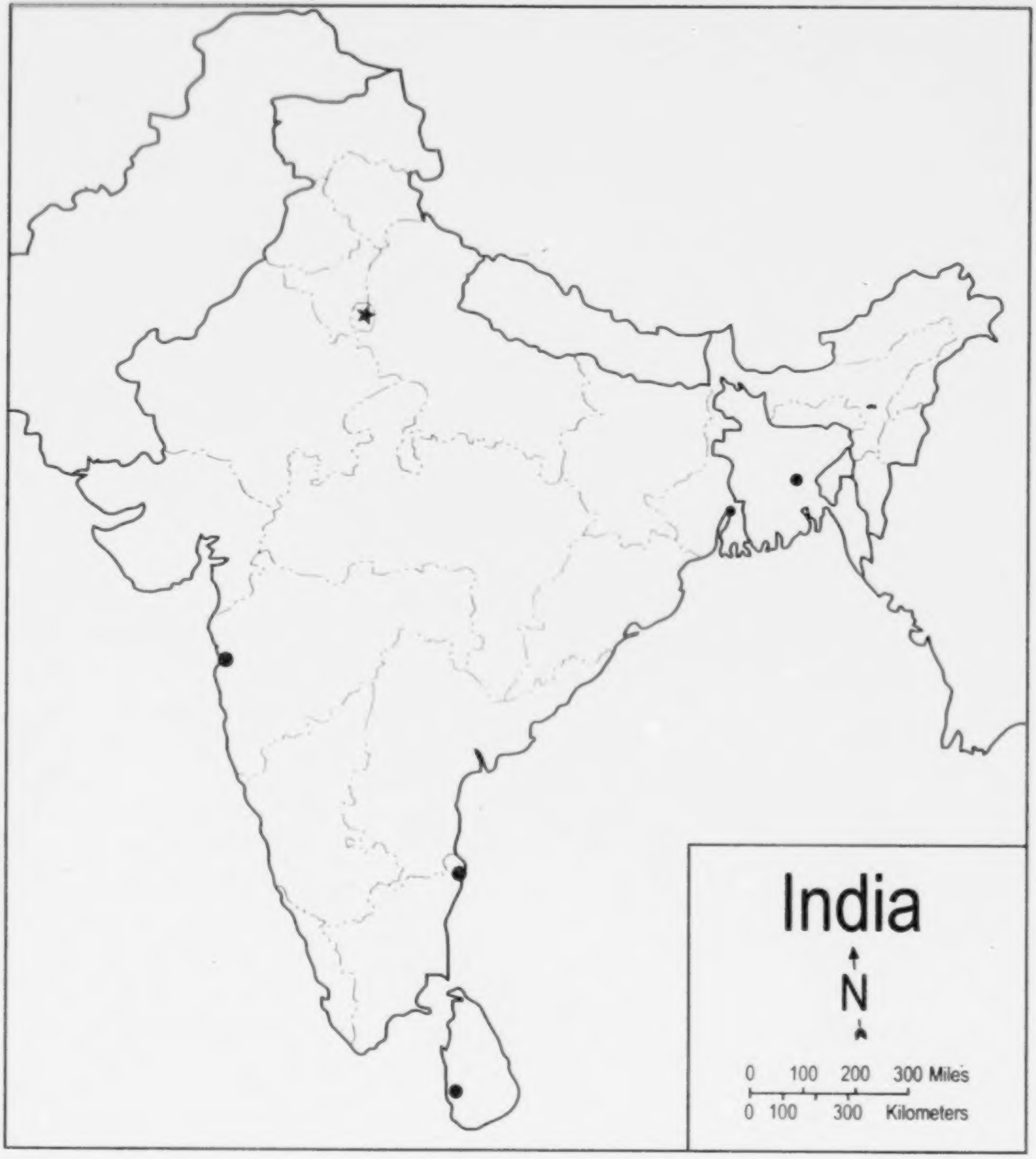
As far as possible, the teacher should not participate in the role play. Your role is that of a facilitator. However, if an impasse occurs, if a particular argument is stretched too long, or if the discussion loses focus, you should intervene and, if required, bring the play to a logical conclusion.

5. After the play is over, ask each participant how he or she felt while enacting the given role, and what was his or her reaction in the situation. Encourage the participants to share their feelings, observations, and understandings—not opinions or suggestions.

Draw the students' attention to any gender biases that may have surfaced during the enactment of the role play or in sharing their observations. Whereas some of these would have emerged from the story being enacted, others would have been the result of the students' own cultural values and understanding of gender relations.

Then ask the rest of the class (i.e., those who were not acting) to share their observations and understandings. Ask students to point out the most striking cultural differences between India and the U.S. if they have not already done so. Also ask them to identify similarities. (In order to assist students here; you can suggest the financial problems faced by divorced women who lack sufficient formal education to cope with their problems; the difficulty in taking care of household duties, working for wages while dealing with child care on a limited income—a situation that many divorced women (and some men) face, or grandmothers who must help to take care of younger grandchildren when their own children face difficulties).

6. Use the discussion questions to discuss some of the issues that emerge in the role play. (If you do not have enough time to perform the role play, you could use the questions to guide a discussion on the case study.)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7.6 Outline Map of India

Questions

1. What do you think was the basic cause that led to the family's problems?
2. What could the family have done when they realized they could not live off of their land?
3. What can they do now? Can they do anything differently?
4. Do you think the family's economic situation would have been any different if Bachu had been literate? If Somal had been literate? How?
5. Do you think it might have helped if the boys had been allowed to complete their schooling? How? [Point out that the rate of unemployment among the educated is also very high in India.]
6. Would the situation have been better if Somal and Bachu had fewer children? Why or why not?
7. Would it have helped if the girls had been sent to school? Why or Why not?
8. Who do you think will save more money, Bachu and his sons or Somal and her daughters? Why?
9. What does each woman, i.e., Somal and Sujima, do in a typical day? How much time do they spend on work that earns money? What unpaid work does each perform? How do their work schedules compare with those of Bachu and his sons? What does the comparison reflect?
10. What is each woman's involvement in decision-making in the family?
11. In what ways does each woman interact with the environment? What special knowledge of their local environment do they possess?

Concluding the Activity:

Divide the class into groups (the original groups could regroup). Each group should consist of some students who did the role play and some who observed. Each group will develop strategies that the family could use to improve their economic situation. Allow 20 minutes for discussion. Each group will identify a spokesperson who will present the strategy developed by the group to the class. If the strategies do not highlight the role of the women, end by discussing the following questions:

1. What do you think are the women's social and economic roles in the society to which the family in this story belongs? What are the men's roles and responsibilities? Which of these are similar to the ones in your society? Which ones are different? (You could also discuss the reasons for the similarities and differences.)
2. In what ways have environmental changes made the lives of the family members more difficult?
3. How could the situation have been different:
    a. if Somal had been legally equal owner of the land with her husband?
    b. if Somal had been the sole owner of the land?
    c. if Sujima had been the sole owner of the land?
4. Who do you think has suffered the most? Why?
5. Rate the intensity of hardship suffered by each family member and explain why you rated them as you did.
6. How would the situation have been different if Somal had been the decision maker? Would she necessarily have made a better decision?
7. How might her equal participation in decision-making have changed the course of events?

Evaluating the Activity:

A. Assessment of students' maps.
B. Evaluation of students' charts of the course of events.
C. Observation of students' participation in role play.
D. Observation of students' participation in discussions.

Alternate Strategy:

Have students interview families who might have recently migrated to their community. In the case of two-parent or blended families, have students interview the husband and the wife separately. What were the reasons that made them decide to move? Did everyone in the family want to move? Who made the final decision about the move—the husband, the wife, jointly, the whole family? Do they think that their life is better or worse than before? In what ways? Compare the answers of the husband and the wife. Were their priorities different? Ask students to try and explain any similarities or differences compared with the family in the case study.

Additional Information

Gujarat is one of the more industrialized states of India (It is about the size of North Dakota in the U.S., but with a population estimated at more than 35 million with a density of 485 people per square mile or 187 per square kilometer. North Dakota's population is about 635 thousand). Surat is in southern Gujarat, where a plague broke out in September 1994, and it is one of the most industrialized and rapidly growing cities in the state with a population of almost 1 million. Ahmedabad, in northern Gujarat, is the state's largest city with a metropolitan area population approaching 3 million. Because industry—mainly petrochemical, dye chemical and textile—is concentrated along the axis between the two cities, this north-south stretch is called Gujarat's industrial corridor. Vast stretches of rich agricultural land have been diverted to industrial development. Although industry has brought employment opportunities, the working conditions in many industrial units are far from safe. Untreated liquid wastes flow into rivers and streams and seep into the groundwater, while hazardous wastes are dumped indiscriminately, thus posing a danger to the health of people and animals living in the area. Except for southern Gujarat, the rest of the state receives very little rain. Aridity increases westward through the physical and cultural regions called Saurashtra and Kutch. The Rann of Kutch, an uplifted seabed, is a saline desert. A major part of the state frequently experiences drought. In drought years, the cattle herders of Kutch and Saurashtra migrate eastward and southward with their cattle in search of fodder. The farmers migrate to cities in search of work. Most are seasonal migrants who return home during the monsoon season, hoping for good rains to water their fields and pasture lands, and to recharge their ponds, tanks, wells, and streams.

Diamond cutting and polishing is a small-scale industry that has grown tremendously in Gujarat in the last 20 to 30 years. Constant exposure to the fine dust generated among the diamond polishers causes respiratory diseases in those who work in this industry. The growth of the diamond industry has been in response to the sharp increase in the demand for small diamonds in the international market. Low wages and abundant labor in India were important reasons for the development and spread of this industry. Besides, cutting and polishing gems has been a traditional craft in India. The feudal lords and princes had encouraged these crafts. The jewelry collections of some of India's princely states are world famous. Kohinoor, one of the most beautiful diamonds (which now adorns the crown of Britain's rulers), had belonged to the Mughal emperors of India.

Jewelry, in India, has not been the sole preserve of royalty. Gold-crafted jewelry has been an essential component of the dowry of the less wealthy and even the poor. Jewelry is called *stree dhan* or "woman's wealth" that traditionally belongs only to her. She can dispose of it as she pleases. She may pass it on to her children, or sell or pawn it when necessary. Sometimes her husband or his family might pressure her to sell it for the good of the family.

Land among most Hindu communities in India was traditionally inherited equally by the sons. The dowry, given to the daughters when they married, was intended to be their share in their father's property. Although dowry is now illegal and the law now gives equal rights to the daughters, in practice the traditional system continues. Daughters, especially in rural India, seldom lay claim to their father's land or house.

Glossary

Bidi: Country-made cigarettes.
Dhabas: Inexpensive roadside restaurants.
Divali: One of the most important Hindu festivals when families get together and pray for prosperity to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.
Fair price shop: A *kirana* shop licensed and subsidized by the government.
Hectare: a unit of land in the metric system. It is equivalent to about 2.47 acres.
Jowar and Bajri: Millets (grains).
Kirana shop: A dry goods shop. The equivalent of an American neighborhood store.
Piloo: A salt-resistant tree species. Scientific name: *Salvadora*.
Ration cards: are issued by the government to each household to buy a certain number of units of basic requirements, such as food grains, sugar and kerosene from the fair price shops.
Rotla: Unleavened bread.

ROLE PLAY CARDS

Teacher's Note: You can have students create the role cards themselves as an interpretive writing exercise. However, if time is short, you can use the following information to create the role cards.

Introduction

In this role play, students assume the roles of different members of a family. Each student puts himself or herself into the assigned character and thinks about the role.

The family is together at home for the festival of Divali, and they are trying to figure out how to solve the problem of repaying their huge debt and retrieving their land from the money lender.

Background

The family's land became infertile because of periodic flooding by sea water. This was caused by deforestation in the region. The declining soil productivity could no longer sustain the family. Bachu therefore decided to mortgage his land and his wife Somal's jewelry to take a loan from the moneylender to start a *kirana* shop. The shop failed and the family had to migrate to try and earn money to feed themselves and repay the ever-mounting debt.

Problem

Despite the expenditure of long hours and hard work of each family member, their debt is mounting much faster than they can repay it because of the extremely high interest rate. The family envisions little hope of being able to retrieve the land in their current situation. They are also leading very difficult lives.

Character Briefs

Somal: Bachu's wife is very bitter because her husband did not listen to her about taking a loan from the bank instead of going to the money lender. She cannot understand why he had not been able to foresee that getting out of the moneylender's clutches would be impossible. If she had had access to credit, she would not have behaved as stupidly as her husband. But she realizes that she is only a woman. She desperately wishes that her children's lives should be better than hers.

Sujima: Somal's mother-in-law believes strongly in fate. She wants her family to come back to Bhangadh. At her age she is finding it very difficult to live alone. She is the pacifier if the discussion gets heated.

Bachu: The father takes his responsibility of being the bread-winner very seriously, but feels helpless about the family's poor situation. He feels guilty about Somal having to work in another village, but also knows that he cannot support her and the girls right now. He is very keen to somehow get his land back from the money lender.

Older son: The older son is quite satisfied working in the diamond cutting factory. He feels good about how much he earns and has no desire to come back to the village. He thinks he has a great future in the city. He likes the facilities that Bhaunagar (population of more than 300 thousand) offers, such as movie theaters and restaurants. He is not much concerned about what the family is going through. He feels he is contributing enough and no one should expect any more from him.

Younger son: The younger son is very attached to his grandmother and worries a lot about her. Yet, he does not want to come back to live in the village as he too is quite satisfied with his life. He is, however, not sure that he will feel the same way in a few years. He wishes that his parents and sisters could go back to Bhangadh and live together as a family with his grandmother.

Older daughter: The older daughter is very angry with her father and brothers. She thinks her brothers are having a good time in Bhaunagar, and that her father is singularly responsible for the situation the family is in. She feels that none of them has any idea about the difficulties that they have to face in Chiroda.

Younger daughter: The younger daughter is her father's pet and feels sorry for him. At the same time she also wants him to understand that their mother works much too hard and is constantly worried about everyone in the fragmented family. She feels they must somehow get back together again.

Raji, Somal's five-year old daughter, adores her grandmother and is quite happy in the village, but she misses her parents, brothers and sisters and would like them all to return to the village permanently.

Reading

Musings of a Fragmented Family

Kiran Banga Chhokar

Chiroda Village, Junagadh District, Gujarat

Somal lay under the stars outside her hut, if you could call it that. For the past two months this little bamboo and plastic sheet shelter was what she and her two daughters came back to every evening. In the distance, from somewhere in the village, she heard someone singing to a gay drumbeat. Perhaps there was a wedding in the village. She did not know because she was a stranger here. The music made her feel even lonelier than she did most nights. She took a quick look around to check for any suspicious movements in the shadows. She shut her eyes, reminding herself that she must not sleep too soundly. She had to keep a watch over her young daughters.

Before she fell asleep, she wondered what her husband and sons were doing. They would probably be fast asleep in the tiny room in Bhaunagar, which they shared with four other men from their village. She hoped they were eating properly. The farmer's son, on whose land she was digging peanuts, had read aloud her older son's letter to her today. They seemed to be having a good time—they often went to the movies in the evenings. She also wondered about her five-year-old daughter Raji, alone in their village with Sujima, Somal's mother-in-law. It was all her husband's fault she thought bitterly. If he had listened to her they might have all been together at home, not in three different places trying to earn some money to pay off their ever-mounting debt.

Bhangadh Village, Ahmedabad District, Gujarat

Sujima opened her eyes. It was still quite dark. She pulled herself out of bed. Her body felt stiff, and her knees ached. "I am growing old," she grumbled to herself as she let herself out of the house with her water pots. At the pond she stepped into the water. She tried to get there early so that she could bathe in privacy. Yesterday she had overslept and had to make an extra trip to carry bath water home. She filled her pots and started back.

Her feet itched as the water dried on them. That meant that the water was becoming more saline. The villagers had neglected the pond ever since Bhangadh had gotten piped water a few years ago. The embankment had given way in a few places, and the pond had not been dredged or cleaned. They had to line up to get water at the village taps that were turned on for only a few hours a day. One could not trust these new-fangled technologies. Sometimes by the time it was one's turn to obtain water, the water supply was turned off. That is why people shoved and pushed and fought. Some days the taps remained dry and they waited in line in vain.

Sujima checked on little Raji when she got home. She thought she would let the poor dear sleep a while longer. The child was the light of her life and her only support these days. She helped Sujima in all her chores around the house and even went to fetch water with her little pitcher on her head. And when they took their cattle out to graze, Raji went about her task very seriously, running back and forth, trying to keep their two cows and two water-buffaloes out of people's fields. She was equally serious whenever they went to collect firewood. She did all the bending and picking for her grandmother and also helped carry a headload of wood home. Sujima wondered what she would have done without Raji.

As she set about cleaning the house and feeding the cattle with the little bit of fodder she had been able to collect the previous day, Sujima thought about the good old days. When she had come to Bhangadh as a child bride nearly 50 years ago, the wells in the village had sweet water throughout the year. So did the village pond. They grew cotton, wheat, rice, *jowar*, and *bajri* on their land. There was plenty to eat for both humans and cattle. Her husband would go to Dholera, the nearby town, and sell wheat and cotton in its busy markets. Dholera, which now had only 3,000 inhabitants, was then a bustling port city with about 50,000 people.

Then came rapid development. Trees upstream along the river were cut for use in industry and in cities. With no trees to hold the soil in place, it eroded into the river with the rainwater. The river deposited its heavy load of silt at its mouth. Ships could no longer come to Dholera. The town started to die. The traders, artisans, farmers, and others were all affected.

People started moving to the surrounding villages in search of livelihoods. Farmers turned to mangroves and *piloo* forests to supplement their income. They cut down the trees to sell as fuelwood in nearby towns. In this way the forests disappeared. With no barrier to hold back the sea at high tide, sea water rushed in and flooded the land. When the water receded it left behind salt that destroyed the soil's fertility. Of the five hectares (12.35 acres) of land that Sujima's son Bachu had inherited, three hectares (7.4 acres) had been rendered saline. The remaining two hectares (5.94 acres) were not enough to sustain a family of nine. They had to do something to earn some money.

Bachu decided to borrow money from the local moneylender to open a *kirana* shop in the village. Sujima remembered how her son and daughter-in-law Somal had fought. Somal had wanted her husband to take a loan from the bank and apply to the government for opening a fair price shop in the village. Bachu said that he would have to find somebody to help him fill the application forms; they might cheat him, he might have to bribe the officials concerned, and the whole process would take too long. Why go through all the hassle when the moneylender was willing to give him, right away, double the amount of money that he had asked for.

Somal had asked how they planned to pay the ten percent per month interest which would go up to 20 percent in the second year. Bachu said she was just being difficult because she did not want to pawn her jewelry. What was it for, if not to bail out the family in times of dire need? After all, he too was mortgaging his land, his most precious possession, to the money-lender. God is kind; he would do well in business and soon they would start paying off their debt.

After much resistance, Somal had given in and Bachu set up his shop. He had the goodwill of many in Bhangadh, so the villagers flocked to his shop. Most of them were impoverished farmers like him with no ready cash to spend. They wanted things on credit. Within two months the shop had to be closed down. The family was deep in debt and distraught.

They pulled Sujima's two grandsons out of school and sent them to Bhaunagar to work in a diamond cutting and polishing unit. Their neighbor had told them that there was good money in it. Bachu, Somal, and the girls went to Surat to work as construction laborers. Sujima had decided to stay back to look after the cattle and the house. They could not just put a lock on a door that had never been locked since the house was built nearly seventy years ago. That would be inauspicious. Besides, somebody needed to keep an eye on the land. One could not trust the moneylender.

Sujima shivered as she thought of the next few months—the darkest time of her life. She'd never felt more alone and lonely. The money-lender and his goons were always hovering around. She felt afraid in her house. She found it difficult to manage the cattle when she took them out grazing. She had to make several trips every day to collect enough fuelwood, water, and fodder. The worst was when she heard that her 14-year-old granddaughter Daksha had been raped in Surat on her way to the public toilet one night. Bachu had beaten Somal black and blue for letting her go alone, and they couldn't report to the police because it was a matter of great shame.

"Enough!" she chided herself. She was not going to dwell on the past. Now she refused to let herself be frightened by the moneylender and his men. She was not alone—she had Raji with her. She was counting days to Divali when her entire family would be back home, even if only for a short while.

Bhaunagar

Bachu sat in front of the diamond polishing machine, but his mind was elsewhere. At the end of the day each of his sons would be paid more than he. They were making good money. Between the three of them they earned Rs. (rupees) 150 to 180 every day (about US$6-7), depending on the number of diamonds they cut and polished. His sons were getting better at the task every day. But Bachu couldn't concentrate. He worried about his mother who was alone in Bhangadh. He worried about his wife who was somewhere in Junagadh district. He hoped that she and the girls were safe. He wondered if he had done the right thing in letting them go on their own. What could he do? They needed the money desperately. Just the monthly interest payments were killing them.

Yes, he and the boys were earning quite a bit, but they could not save much. Living in a tiny rented room in a very congested part of town, they missed the open spaces and the fresh air of the village. Cooking was impossible because there was not any fuelwood to collect, and they did not have a ration card to buy kerosene. So they ate in the little *dhabas*. That was expensive, and the food was bad. Now that the boys were earning their own money, they wanted to dress well. They had each just bought themselves terylene trousers and a shirt. There was nothing to do in the evenings so they sometimes went to see a movie. Bachu himself tried to drown his worries occasionally in country-made liquor.

He wondered whether he had lost his land forever. His sons were not interested in farming. They had told him so. Without personal care, even the two hectares of cultivable land would go to waste. He knew there were ways to improve the soil. Some of his neighbors had treated theirs with lime. He had heard that an extension agency was giving people the technical know-how. He had also heard that some industrialists were interested in buying land in the village to set up a cement factory. They were planning to use the coral from the coastal reefs as raw material for the cement. The industrialists would not care about the agricultural productivity of the land, and there might be jobs to be had in the village. The thought of selling his ancestral land seemed sacrilegious. He knew his mother would hate the idea. So would Somal. What is the use of thinking of options when I do not know if I will ever be able to get my land back, Bachu wondered desperately. At least I will see my family together again at Divali.

Chiroda village

Somal sat in the shade of a tree patting her younger daughter's hot forehead. She hoped the fever would go away on its own. Her mother-in-law would have known what herbs to give her to bring down the fever. She could not afford to take the girl to a doctor.

She sighed as she lay down next to her daughter. This was the only time of day that Somal got to rest a little. She was up long before sunrise every morning. She and the girls had to bathe, fetch water and firewood, clean, cook, eat, and be ready by 6.30 A.M. when the tractor arrived to take the laborers to the farm. From 7 o'clock she and her daughters worked non-stop, digging out the peanuts. It was back-breaking work. The men would stop occasionally to smoke a *bidi*, but the women had no excuse to take a break. Perhaps that was why the landlord preferred to hire women. They stopped only when the sun was high in the sky. That is when they sat in the shade near the well and ate the *rotla*, onion, and the garlic and chili chutney they'd packed in the morning. Then they rested for about an hour after which they were back to pulling out peanuts. When they straightened up at the end of the day, their backs hurt and their hands and fingernails were sore. For all this hard work Somal was paid Rs.30 per day (about $1.20). Her daughters got Rs.20 (about 80 cents) each. They lived as frugally as possible. But the girls needed new clothes. What they wore was so faded and frayed. She told herself she must get them new clothes for Divali.

By the time the tractor dropped them back, the sun would be about to set. Somal would send the girls to fetch water and she would hurry to the flour mill to get some flour before it closed. On days when they did not have time to collect firewood, she would have to buy that too. She also had to buy oil, sugar, and some other groceries almost every day. She couldn't store anything in her hut because she did not have containers that the rats would not get into. Besides, things might get stolen during the day. She hurried back as soon as she could because she didn't want to leave her daughters out of sight for a moment longer than necessary.

This was her fate and she'd have to live with it, but she wondered about her daughters. She looked down at their sleeping faces—one of them flushed with fever. Somal hoped that their fate was better than hers. She prayed that when they got married they would go to live in villages where there was fertile land, plenty of cattle, sweet water, and enough food. For them she dreamed of a future without drudgery.

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Summary

An Equitable Future?: A Brief Look at Women's Activism in Asia

Kiran Banga Chhokar, Chiang Lan-hung, and Carolyn V. Prorok

Throughout the essays and learning activities of this volume, the authors have highlighted the difficult and inequitable working conditions of women relative to the men in their lives, the unfulfilled promise of western-style development in raising the standard of living for women and their children, and the disproportionate burden women carry in both reproductive and productive development in the national policies of many countries. Although our intent and purpose for producing this volume was to illuminate the perspective and conditions of women and their experiences of development in Asia, we do not want to leave you, the reader, with the sense that women (in Asia and around the world) are simply passive victims of both traditional and modern discriminatory practices. We offer, therefore, the following essay that highlights only a few of the progressive and activist women and organizations making positive changes in their respective societies. First we will briefly discuss an historic figure who had a significant influence on girls' education in her lifetime; Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. Second is a description of a modern-day women's activist organization in India; Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). Finally we go to eastern Asia with a short history of the women's movement in Taiwan as described by Professor Chiang, Lan-hung at the National Taiwan University in Taipei.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

As early as the late nineteenth century, the Bengali writer Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1988), challenged the seemingly intractable patriarchal order of colonial Indian society (especially in Bengal, her homeland—Bengal includes contemporary Bangladesh and West Bengal, a state in India). Roushan Jahan (1988:1) notes that Hossain "...is the first and foremost feminist of Bengali Muslim Society." Although the term feminism is a relatively new one, and Rokeya herself would not have used the term herself, one cannot help but recognize her work as feminist. Her first publications in Calcutta journals on the oppression of women occurred in 1903-1904. Over the next three decades Rokeya distinguished herself as an activist and leader of women in her society. She established the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in 1909, and it continues to define excellence in education in India today. By 1916 she worked to create the Bengali Muslim Women's Association, and Rokeya presided over the Bengal Women's Education Conference in Calcutta in 1926 and the Indian Women's Conference in Aligarh in 1932. Activism by women and for women has a long distinguished history in South Asia.

SEWA

With a relatively long history of activism, contemporary women in South Asia have continued to create progressive organizations and movements that result in benefits for all members of their society. In Gujarat, women organized themselves into SEWA or the Self-Employed Women's Association in 1972. In both Gujarati and Hindi, *sewa* means service. Members of SEWA understand their organization to be a *sangam*, or confluence, of three movements: the labor movement, the co-op movement and the women's movement. Gandhian philosophy is their inspiration whereby members organize for social change through the path of non-violence and truth (HomeNet 1997). SEWA promotes an indigenous version of "development" in that development takes the form of helping members form their own cooperatives and groups. The founder of SEWA, Ela Bhatt, recognized that (Rose 1992: 36):

> Eighty per cent of Indian women are poor, illiterate, and economically very active. It is these women who should be taking a leading role in the women's movement of our country. Ninety percent of these women's time is taken up in their work. Work is their priority. If we bring these women into the movement on the basis of their work, it is strategically the most effective way of organizing large numbers of women according to issues which are relevant to them.

SEWA was set up in 1972 in Ahmedabad, a city in western India, as a trade union of poor, self-employed women in the informal sector of the economy. SEWA's current membership is made up of 212,000 self-employed women from all over India. They include hawkers and vendors who sell their wares from baskets or small pushcarts in the streets; women who sell or trade their labor by working as agricultural laborers, construction workers, cleaners, domestic help, head loaders, rag-pickers (who collect recyclable waste such as paper from garbage dumps); and home-based workers such as potters, weavers, block printers, embroiderers, garment stitchers, and incense stick makers. These women work long hours but have no protection against accidents, poor working conditions, or ill health that workers in the formal sector of the economy do, nor are they guaranteed minimum wages. Their meager earnings, however, are an indispensable component of family income. In fact, about one-third of poor households in India are supported solely by self-employed women.

The issues relevant to these women are to ensure steady work, to be paid fair rates for their products and fair wages for their labor, that they have access to raw materials at fair prices, and fair access to markets to eliminate oppressive demands of middlemen who often cheat them of their profits. They need fair credit so that they can buy their raw materials and tools of trade and to escape perpetual indebtedness to moneylenders. As with all workers, self-employed women also need access to affordable health care, child care, and legal aid.

SEWA serves to organize women in a unique way in that it is a union of workers with diverse occupations who neither have a formal employer nor a common workplace. It was not formed to work over and against a specific employer as most conventional trade unions are, but as a coalition of locally defined cooperatives where the workers can voice their demands collectively, fight exploitation and harassment, find solutions to their problems, and become self-reliant. Gandhian philosophy is their inspiration whereby members organize for social change through determination, perseverance, and nonviolence.

According to Ela Bhatt (1976, 19), SEWA seeks to help its members realize

> certain practical truths which are in their own interest: (i) To be healthy in order to avoid loss of workdays, (ii) to be literate enough to avoid being trapped in corrupt practices, (iii) to improve their skills by better training in the modern sense, in order to increase their bargaining power, (iv) to learn to save in order to build their own capital or to make use of credit facilities for productive purposes.

As the women's need for credit was a major concern, SEWA's first effort was to set up its own cooperative bank that is responsive to the needs of its members. SEWA raised its share capital from minuscule contributions from each of its thousands of members. The bank enables the women to buy materials, tools, and other assets, making them self-reliant and free of their dependence on money lenders.

SEWA promotes an indigenous version of development in that development takes the form of helping members of various occupation groups, such as rag-pickers, roadside vendors and hawkers, form their own cooperatives. In addition to facilitating bulk buying and joint marketing, the cooperatives give these women the opportunity to share skills and expertise, and develop new tools, designs, and techniques. They also enable women to have more control over resources, and to gain self-confidence as well as status in their society by becoming owners instead of victims subject to exploitation.

SEWA runs its own social security system, derived from members' dues, and contributions. Members can avail themselves of health-care, child-care, savings, and insurance. In the last ten years SEWA has added new departments of health, training, communication, research, health, and housing to its basic work as a trade union. Research at SEWA aims to understand the issues of self-employed women and to document their experiences. SEWA also has a unit called Video SEWA where the women produce films on issues that affect them. Their leading sound recorder, incidentally, is a fruit vendor, and their outstanding videographer is an agricultural worker.

In the beginning SEWA restricted its activities to Ahmedabad city, but today it has a vibrant Rural Development Program that concentrates on generating employment in agriculture and allied occupations. Land development, water harvesting, and fodder farming have generated new jobs and skills while contributing to environmental improvement. The employment thus generated, combined with union-sponsored social security and cooperatives, has led to a significant decline in out-migration of rural families in search of work.

Self-employed women become members of SEWA by paying a nominal membership fee. Every three years the members elect their representatives to the Trade Council, who in turn elect their key decision-making body: the 25-member Executive Committee. This body represents all the major trades and occupations of SEWA members and is authorized to negotiate with government officials on the creation of labor legislation, and with wholesale and retail merchants who purchase goods produced by SEWA members.

SEWA struggles on behalf of its members at three levels: to end exploitation they face in their work environments; to ensure the implementation of fair laws and to deal with officials; and to campaign for formulation of policies and legislation favoring self-employed women.

SEWA has been working towards influencing policies both nationally and internationally. An ongoing national campaign seeks support for a National Policy on Hawkers and Vendors that SEWA hopes to push through the Indian Parliament. A major achievement for SEWA has been the adoption, in June 1996, by the International Labor Organization (ILO) of the Convention and Recommendation on Home Work. Home-based work has been growing worldwide as companies seek competitive advantages in the global economy by looking for cheap labor wherever they can find it.

Production is subcontracted, and the small sub-contractors farm out work to home-based workers in India, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Canada, Australia and elsewhere. Almost everywhere home-based workers, largely women, face poor working conditions, low wages, and lack of work security. The ILO Convention that sets minimum standards of pay and working conditions can then form the basis of national laws and policies. This is the culmination of a long campaign spearheaded by SEWA for recognition of home-based work internationally.

Inspired by SEWA's successes, many such organizations have been emerging all over India. The SEWA movement has also reached South Africa where the Self-Employed Women's Union has been registered as a trade union of vendors and home-based workers.

SEWA is an organization created by women that has increased real wages and improved working conditions for hundreds of thousands of women, in India and also around the world.

The Women's Movement in Taiwan*

The Republic of China on Taiwan underwent significant changes in both economic and political aspects in the post-war period. In the past four decades Taiwan has emerged from an agricultural society to become a country with the second highest foreign exchange reserves in the world. Taiwan has become the world's eleventh largest trading nation, maintaining an upward economic growth rate despite a global recession. In the meantime, the population has become better educated and well-informed, with a surplus of highly educated human power. Substantial political liberalization has occurred in the previous authoritarian political system, particularly because of democratization reforms in the late 1980s. The formation of an opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, occurred in 1986. Martial law was abolished in 1987, resulting in more freedom of expression and a more open style of politics.

Women's educational attainment in the last twenty-five years is impressive, and the absorption of women into the economy reflects this to a large extent. Women have expanded their traditional roles of caring and nurturing to increased socio-economic participation, often in conflict with their traditional familial obligations. Increasing numbers of women participate in public services and education, and show even higher visibility in commerce. Women, however, still have a long way to go to be regarded as indispensable to the public sphere, and their success depends on social support and individual endeavors.

Women's organizations in Taiwan have traditionally supported a gender ideology strongly favoring patriarchal and Confucian traditions until the mid-1980s when new feminist organizations came to the fore. The former emphasized women's supportive and subservient role (*hsiang fu chau tze*) to ensure a "harmonious and stable society," whereas the latter introduced feminism. Although Lu Hsiu-lien introduced the notion of feminism in 1971, because restrictions in Taiwan's wartime non-governmental organization law would not allow her to form her new feminist organization. As a young, bright intellectual woman who majored in law, Lu began her activities by giving speeches and writing newspaper columns. At the time she questioned the double standard of chastity and the values that encouraged female subservience to males. She spoke for legalization of abortion and of women's rights to decide on the number of children to have and to carry their own family names after marriage. These ideas ran contrary to the ideology of the Kuomingtang, the ruling party, which took a conservative view towards gender issues. Being a political dissident at the same time, Lu was jailed for her political activities in the late 1970s. When she was released after five years, she continued to pursue her feminist and political activities. The first wave of the women's movement that took place between 1972 and 1977 was almost a "one woman crusade" in Lu's words.

The second wave of the women's movement started in 1982 when followers of Lu formed the Awakening with the objectives of raising women's consciousness and encouraging self-development. Before then, no women's organization had taken a feminist perspective. From the beginning it won support from liberal individuals and a few women's organizations.

The Awakening appealed to a more highly educated and informed public. It took the lead in mobilizing support from other women's groups to form an *ad hoc* coalition to act as pressure groups by addressing issues of concern to women. For the first time in 1987, it held street demonstrations as an expression of women's protest against parents' selling their daughters into prostitution.

Awareness of gender ideology of the general populace and grassroots women has not changed much. The influence of traditional cultural norms toward women is still strong. Social attitudes towards women's employment and political participation have changed slowly, and the institutional support for career women does not match actual needs. Women's access to high ranking jobs and leadership roles fall far behind that of men. The lack of egalitarian laws puts women at a disadvantageous position compared to that of men. Despite women's achievements in education, their political participation has increased at a rather slow pace.

In contrast to the repressive environment in which Lu lived, the Awakening was able to gain access to significant resources and to grow under the leadership of a group of dedicated individuals. It encouraged women to participate in politics through political education, launching various campaigns in 1989. Drafting an equal employment bill was the first constructive step to ensure women's rights in the workplace. This bill focused on guaranteeing the participation of women in the labor force as well as freeing them from discriminatory practices such as being forced to sign contracts preventing women from working after the age of thirty.

Since 1985, various new women's groups have been formed, reflecting not only the social influences of the feminist movement but a more liberal political climate. The lifting of the martial law on July 15, 1987 opened an era of freedom of expression and was a critical interlude to social change. Newspapers and magazines discussed women's multiple roles were discussed more frequently. Many new women's groups formed between 1985 and 1990 took a different approach from the traditional women's organizations. The new organizations aimed at improving the status of women and providing support for disadvantaged women. Demonstrating more breadth and variety of functions and activities, they attracted more women with different experiences. For instance, the Warm Life, organized by divorced women, provided moral support and psychological counseling, and the Homemakers' Union and Foundation started in 1989 has become a leading group on environmental protection and inspired a large number of women to participate in social movements for humanistic education, human rights, anti-juvenile prostitution, and anti-pornography.

Though small in scale and short of resources, these women's groups are winning media support. Women today are more likely to be projected in the news as agents of change rather than sex objects, subservient wives, or movie stars. The public is learning that women can be independent and capable leaders and that many vocal women can stand up for their rights and contribute to the welfare of society.

Summary

As you can see, from this very brief outline of women's activism, change is on the horizon for Asia's women (Basu 1995). Our experience in Western societies has shown us that this change is slow and the struggles are great. Yet, women and men the world over are accepting this challenge and working to create a more equitable future for all of us.

*This section on Taiwan is excerpted, with permission, from: Chiang, Lan-hung. 1995. "Women's Movement, Women's Studies." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*. 1:152-159. Seoul: Ewha Woman's University Press.

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Multi-Media Resources

The following (limited) selection of videos can be used to supplement the learning activities provided in this volume. *Symbols preceding resources indicate distributors listed at the end of this section*

✤ *All Dressed in White* (India, Singapore, U.S.A., 18 min):

This documentary explores the complex relationships among religion, ethnicity, and gender by investigating one key symbol: the wedding dress. The film introduces four women in a Catholic Indian family from Goa and traces their journeys over the last three generations.

★ *The Amahs of Hong Kong* (China/Philippines, 10 min):

Thousands of Filipino women leave children and country behind to work as domestics in Hong Kong.

● *Benazir Bhutto: Walking the Tightrope* (Pakistan, 52 min):

In 1988 Benazir Bhutto became Prime Minister of Pakistan, the first woman to head a Muslim country. Born into a feudal society and educated at Oxford, she has straddled two worlds. One of Benazir's challenges is to improve the situation of women, who have long been victims of discrimination and violence.

★ *Community* (Bangladesh, 23.5 min):

This film looks at the dramatic story of villagers in Bangladesh who have transformed themselves from beggars to business people and simultaneously established positive new roles and relationships for men and women. The video presents a compelling story of positive long term change that comes with women's participation in community affairs.

✚ *Confucianism* (China, 56 min):

Born in China of missionary parents, Huston Smith learned about Chinese language, culture, and religion while growing up near Shanghai. Smith explains how the intertwining of opposites is key to understanding the great religions of China.

● *Dalda 13: A Talented Woman History Forgot* (India, 23 min):

Although her powerful images of India have been seen around the world, Homai Vyarawalla's name never appears in the annals of photojournalism. In a country where women were supposed to be submissive, Ms. Vyarawalla was toting a large camera on her sari-draped shoulder, always pushing to where the action was. After retirement she burned all her negatives, believing no one was interested. This long overdue tribute suggests she was overlooked because she was Asian and a woman.

● *Daughters of the Nile* (Egypt, 46 min):

This beautifully photographed, revealing film about Egypt's women captures their separate and subordinate life under the Islamic code. Men and women speak about their traditions, expectations, and patterns of life.

● *Defying the Odds: Women Around the World Create New Roles* (Pakistan, Hong Kong, Guatemala, Latvia, 29 min):

This upbeat film, produced for the Beijing Women's Conference, focuses on the lives of four women of diverse ages and backgrounds who have broken ground in new fields. They are questioning age-old traditions as they forge careers in their respective societies.

◆ *Designing Women/Lifting the Veil* (India, Jordan, 30 min):

This film looks at women's entrepreneurship and the progress women have made where they have defied orthodoxy and carved careers for themselves.

✚ *The Differences Between Men and Women* (general, 23 min):

The debate still rages: Are the social and psychological differences between men and women conditioned by biology or by familial and social environment?

★ *Dry Days in Dobbagunta* (India, 10 min):

A literacy campaign for women in South India gave birth to a highly effective anti-liquor campaign.

◆ *Eastern Spin* (India, Nepal, 23 min):
"Trade, not aid," is the motto of the women profiled in this documentary who work in cooperatives producing handicrafts that end up in shops throughout the world.

● *Gateway to Yemen* (Yemen, 40 min):
This documentary captures traditional life in rural Yemen which revolves around the search for water. The film provides a close-up view of a culture where marriages are arranged, women are veiled and kept separately, and every male is armed. With the discovery of oil, the outside world is bringing change to Yemen.

★ *The Gods of Our Fathers* (general, 51 min):
Patriarchy is neither natural nor innate, argues Gwynne Dyer, the historian and journalist who hosts this award-winning film. Dyer shows how the invention of patriarchy made possible the rise of the nation state, and a century from now he hopes that we will be explaining patriarchy to our children the way we explain slavery now.

● *Half the Sky* (China, 27 min):
Fifty years ago the Chinese Communist revolution promised women equality after thousands of years of subservience to men. Has the revolution reversed the tradition of tyranny towards women? As this film shows, today's Chinese women have little more control over their lives than that of their ancestors. Their concerns are neglected while their burdens increase.

★ *Half the Sky: The Women of the Jiang Family* (China, 50 min):
This program explores the changes in women's lives through four generations of women in the Jiang family over the last 50 years in China, from the grandmother who was bought by the Jiang family at age 14 to her 24-year-old great-granddaughter who works as a sales assistant at the Pierre Cardin boutique in Beijing.

✚ *India: Environment and Industry* (India, 20 min):
India's fast economic growth is creating pressures on the environment that are hard to resist. Will the development in Dehra Dun be a model for the future? Can India afford to protect the quality of its environment? Can it afford not to?

✚ *India: Farming and Development* (India, 20 min):
Traditional farming in India is undergoing change and this program examines this through the case of a farmer and his family. Due to complex reasons, farmers are moving away from the traditional cultivation of rice, to grow cash crops like spices and pineapples.

◆ *India: Women's Rights* (India, 28 min):
The status of women in India raises questions about basic human rights. This film examines the deplorable situations of many Indian women who work full days at menial labor, while also running a household, raising kids and serving a husband.

✚ *Iran: A Modern Dilemma* (Iran, 29 min):
This program traces the history of the Persian Empire from the first millennium B.C. to the establishment of modern-day Iran. It describes the Shah's efforts at modernization and Iranian life after the 1979 revolution.

◆ *Japanese Woman* (Japan, 28 min):
Interviews with modern Japanese women, and the depiction of their typical lifestyle, show how the women of Japan are searching for ways to develop their unique approach to women's liberation.

✚ *My Husband Doesn't Mind if I Disco* (Tibet, China, 28 min):
This video examines the effects on Tibetan women of their exposure to feminism under the Maoists as well as the degree to which older cultural attitudes regarding gender relations remain in place.

● *Not Without My Veil: Amongst the Women of Oman* (Oman, 29 min):
This film introduces us to educated, independent women who dress in the traditional way, yet are moving into new areas for women.

◆ *On Equal Terms: Sex Equity in the Workforce* (general, 29 min):
Explores young women preparing for self-supporting careers. Topics examined are: language stereotypes, schools, and "woman's work" vs. "man's work."

✚ *Portrait of an Onnagata* (Japan, 30 min):
This program looks at the history of Kabuki and the role of women, and looks particularly at the dynastic development of the *onnagata*—the female impersonator—and the intricate techniques and details by which a thoroughly masculine male transforms himself into a man's dream of the womanly woman: more feminine and more perfect than any real woman.

★ *Rising Above: Women of Vietnam* (Vietnam, 50 min):
In the long years of war against France and the U.S., Vietnamese women fought alongside men as equals. Women such as Mrs. Binh, who negotiated with Henry Kissinger at the Paris Peace Accords, and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Dinh, general and deputy commander of the Vietcong forces, reached the highest positions of power. Twenty years after the signing of the peace agreement, however, the revival of Confucianism and the spread of market forces are conspiring to relegate women once again to the role of second class citizens.

★ *Science for Survival* (India, 50 min):
Activist and ecologist Vandana Shiva is the leader of a people's movement in India that opposes Western-style development. She argues that the Green Revolution failed because development strategists ignored women's knowledge of traditional seed varieties. In addition the film looks at the wealth of women's indigenous knowledge of plants and herbs used in the traditional Ayurvedic healing system.

✢ *Sisters and Daughters Betrayed* (Thailand, Philippines, 28 min):
Sex trafficking is a global crisis of growing dimensions. Millions of women and young girls have been illegally transported from rural to urban areas and across national borders for prostitution. The sex trade has devastating effects on women's lives, and a hopeful note is sounded by the actions of women's organizations working against it.

★ *Teach a Woman How to Fish And....* (Fiji, 10 min):
In Fiji women are involved in new sea farming projects that give them a greater say in family and village affairs.

● *Wild Swans—Jung Chang* (China, 59 min):
This epic account of the lives of three generations of Chinese women captures the turbulent transformation of China in the twentieth century.

● *Women in Bangladesh: Taslima Nasreen* (Bangladesh, 23 min):
Ms. Nasreen is one of the few women in her country who have dared to call for more freedom for the women of Bangladesh. As a result, she is a fugitive from her native country.

● *Women of the Yellow Earth* (China, 50 min):
This film takes the viewer to the heart of rural China. It introduces us to two village women: Bai, who has just delivered her third child and is in trouble with the family planning officials, and Ma Ning, who is about to be married by arrangements planned by a matchmaker. It shows how the state intercedes in family life, with rules and penalties for non-compliance.

Distributors

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